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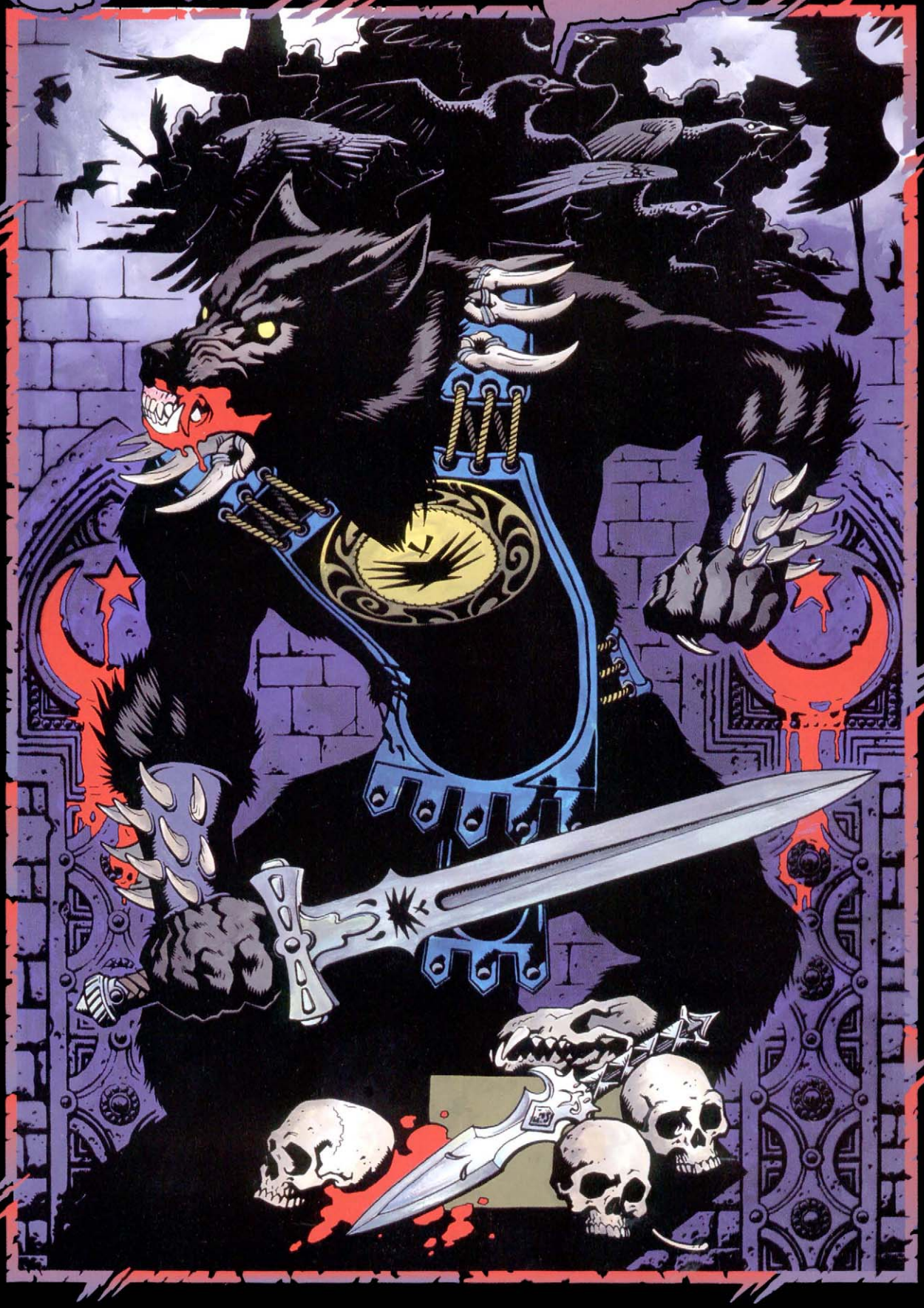

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The Gathering Storm

From the Journal of Detective Sean Agache

June 14, 2002

Man oh man, it's been awhile since I last wrote. Last entry was, what, sometime in May? Yeah, May 25th. Three weeks. An awful lot can happen in three weeks. But the shit that's gone down here in the last few days is big even by LA standards, and somehow I wound up in the middle of it all. I guess that's not surprising, really; half the department's gunning for me because they think I'm a dirty cop, and in some ways I guess I am. So you kind of have to expect that I won't be far away when things go south. But I swear to God, this blood war hit me by surprise as much as anyone else. I may be dirty, but there are some lines even I won't cross. Hanging dumb-ass Silver Fang pups out to dry is one of them. But it seems the rest of my pack didn't have the same reservations, and now a lot of people are dead because of it.

It all started a couple of weeks ago. Things run pretty smoothly around here, especially in the neighborhoods I control. We have better luck on the streets than most precincts do because we know we can't deal with every crisis that comes down the pike. So, we don't even try; we just try to minimize the damage, take out the most dangerous threats, and keep things safe enough that people can function on a basic level without getting killed just for crossing a street. I guess you could call it a sort of triage, because that's how it works. It isn't an ideal solution, but it works. It keeps the body count down, and it keeps the product on the streets to a minimum. That make me dirty? Tell it to the finger, pal. When you start getting better results, you let me know and we'll talk.

Anyway, the dealers and the bangers and everyone else all know the drill, and most of them are smart enough to stick to it. But every once in awhile we get someone new in town, some dipshit who thinks he can get away with whatever he wants and not face the consequences. It's usually a vampire of some sort, someone who thinks that his power gives him a free ticket to Easy Street and makes him immune to the cops. But I got news for you: It don't work that way. Me and my kind have been dealing with vampires for centuries, and we know how to take 'em down. And we will take them down, make no mistake — it's just a question of when and how. Before we can pound that into their skulls, though, they manage to set up shop and really start tearing into the locals. That messes up the whole system, and that's when the shit hits the fan and I get to clean up the mess.

So, about two weeks ago things started going bad. We started seeing a huge increase in product on the streets, pretty much overnight. Not just a bit here and there, either

— I'm talking about tons of crack, meth, you name it, showing up all over the place. At the same time, the bangers were getting riled up, and we had some ugly shootings — again, all over the place. It's like someone turned up the insanity meter all over the city, and after the second or third case I began to wonder just what the fuck was going on. And of course I wasn't the only one. Our beloved captain crawled onto my back like the monkey that he is, and started harping on me to find out what was happening and fix it. Guy's a real piece of work; Silver Fang Kin, if you can believe that, and he wanted my badge more than anyone. But who does he turn to when things get nasty? Yeah, that's right, he turns to me. Fucking asshole. So there he is, telling me over and over again that he wants this dealt with, that he wants things cleaned up before they get any more out of hand. The guy wanted a good track record for his run as lieutenant, since he planned on running for city council come November. Yeah, right. Good fucking luck. But I told him the things he wanted to hear, and headed out to shake some folks down and see what was what.

Naturally, we started with the rest of the sept. I gotta say here, we have a pretty cool sept. Chris and I are cops, and we head up a strike team who does most of the ugly work in town. Good people there, and they're all Kin. We don't run the city by ourselves or anything, but we do a bang up job of organizing Kin networks on the street, keeping tabs on what's going down and setting up the bad guys so our sept can take 'em down. That's just us, though; rest of the sept operates a lot differently. Some of them sideline as bangers, and use their buddies to sniff out vamp and Wyrm activity before the rest of us even get wind of it. Others work freelance (mostly bounty hunters, but also PIs), and some are just what you might call concerned citizens. But they all do a great job of keeping the peace, most of the time. It's kinda funny, really. You'd think that urban sorts like us would be Glass Walkers or Bone Gnawers, but it isn't so. We're Shadow Lord all the way, doing the same thing here we've been doing for centuries in Europe: helping our Kin survive, and doing what we can to keep the power brokers from getting too drunk on their power. We do know a few Gnawers, but they're mostly involved in things like shelters, detox programs, stuff like that. I don't know any that are cops, though. Probably harder to pull the right strings to cover for the Curse. But that's okay; we do our stuff, they do theirs, and we get along okay.

Anyway, we meet up with the rest of the sept, and they tell us they've been hearing about new players in town. They have premium product, and an inhuman ability to market it just where it'll hurt the most. Doesn't take a genius to figure out that there's something supernatural going on; humans do some bad shit, but even the best of them aren't organized enough to cause this much chaos in this short a time. I mean, I guess it could happen, but in practice is just doesn't. I figured it was probably a vampire setting up shop, and the bangers in the sept agreed. So I told them to sniff around, get some details, and hopefully we'd find a way to nail this guy before he became too much of a problem.

Well, no such luck. Couple hours later, I get a call from Ice Pac, a wannabe rapper and member of the Glorious Lords. The guy's originally from Jamaica, but once he Changed he found he really dug the whole Balkan look, so he's basically this black guy who thinks he's Rasputin or something. Fucking hilarious, but since he can back up his lingo when it counts nobody gives him any shit. Anyway, he tells me our vamp friend is part of some undead serpent cult, some sort of "serpent's sabbat" or whatever. We never learned too much about the details, but it didn't really matter — he was a real badass, heavy into all that voodoo shit, and he was packing some serious heat. Strong mojo, lots of lackeys, solid product. So I asked Ice where the hell this guy came from. Leeches with these kinds of resources don't just spring up overnight, you know? I mean, what the fuck?

Ice tells me the guy's in exile from Miami, and that he came here to hide out while the heat cooled down back home. Dumbass way to hide out if you ask me, drawing attention to yourself like that, but maybe he thought he'd be dealing with a bunch of norms. I dunno. It's a reasonable assumption, I guess; this place isn't exactly high profile, and punks like us normally don't do the city thing. But his reasons for coming here were pretty much a moot point; he had to go down, one way or another, and we had to figure out how to make it happen.

The main problem here lay in the fact that our new dealer friend was a vamp. That wouldn't normally be a problem, but man, this guy knew how to cover his tracks. His distribution network was a nightmare, and we couldn't get past the first couple of layers without hitting brick walls. That meant that even if we knew who he was, most of the evidence we had couldn't be used in court. And that meant we couldn't use standard police resources to bring him in. It'd be nice to knock his door down with a bunch of uniforms at our backs, but good luck getting a warrant to do that when all you have to go on is the word of a bunch of Gifts. Good enough for us, but not for the DA. That meant we'd have to take him down off the books, and one pack just isn't enough to make that work.

So while we were trying to separate our heads from our asses, we heard from the other packs in the sept that things were getting nasty on the street. The police were pretty much powerless to stop the vampire's activities, because he just had too much going on. The clever bastard actually used that to his advantage, and managed to trigger a gang war and incite a riot. The uniforms moved in to break it up, but before it was all done we'd lost a lot of people. The vamp had used the riots as cover to take out some of our best guys, including Ice Pac. It was a mess, and didn't show any signs of getting any better.

Now, here's where things start to get ugly. There are a number of Silver Fang packs in the greater LA county area, and they'd be more than enough to help us out. So I talked

to the chief about getting their help, and he basically told me to piss off. I looked at him like he'd grown three heads or something; tribe rivalries were all well and good, but we had a real problem here, and we needed their help. Thinking back on it, I know that he couldn't have helped me much if he'd wanted to; when you're Kin to the Silver Fangs, it takes some really serious fuckups to get stuck in a pisshole like this. If his relations with the tribe were all that good to begin with he'd probably be living it up in some place like Beverly Hills or Santa Monica. So, he was no help at all.

This meant we were basically at a standstill, and had to fight this bloodsucker a bit at a time, chipping away at his resources until we could take him down. That's a really messy way to go about it, but it was all we could do — the Fangs weren't about to listen to me, since they'd just assume it was a trap. Fangs and Lords don't get along well in the best of times, and the current situation sure as hell didn't qualify. Beyond that, we didn't have much of anything else to work with. That meant we were basically up a creek, unless a gift from God dropped out of the sky.

It wasn't until later on that I realized that that's exactly what happened.

It turns out that the Silver Fangs had some ambitious young bucks in their sept at the time, and one of them, a Wyrmfoe Ahroun by the name of Justin Phillips, saw what was going on here and decided to have a look around. He was a prodigy of sorts (great klaive duelist, by all accounts), and had a reputation for being pretty nasty when it came to hunting bloodsuckers. If he'd come straight to us, we probably could have arranged something. Plenty of glory to be had for all, given how fucked-up things were. But he wasn't interested in that — he wanted to take out this vamp himself, so he could rub it in our faces afterwards.

Somehow — I still don't know how, and probably never will — Chris found out about this, and got in contact with Phillips. He gave Phillips the names of some choice lackeys, people whose absence could shut down the pipeline permanently if they were taken out. See, tribal lore says that these snake-cult vampires only operate via intermediaries, and are too chickenshit to handle most of their deals themselves. So, take out the footsoldier Renfields, and you're all set. We couldn't do that — they were too well fortified, and they had their own sorts of immunity on the street. If we moved in, the riots we'd dealt with the day before would look pretty tame by comparison. But Phillips thought he had a chance, so he took it.

It was a bad move. A really bad fucking move. The vamp got wind of what Phillips was up to, and was waiting for him when he showed up. This guy had some real potent blood, and the underlings he had with him were all fortified on it, making them enough to let him burn Phillips like he was a little old lady. Killing the guy would have been bad enough, but this vamp had a sadistic streak, and decided to take things a step further: he tried to *turn* the Fang. Gives me chills.

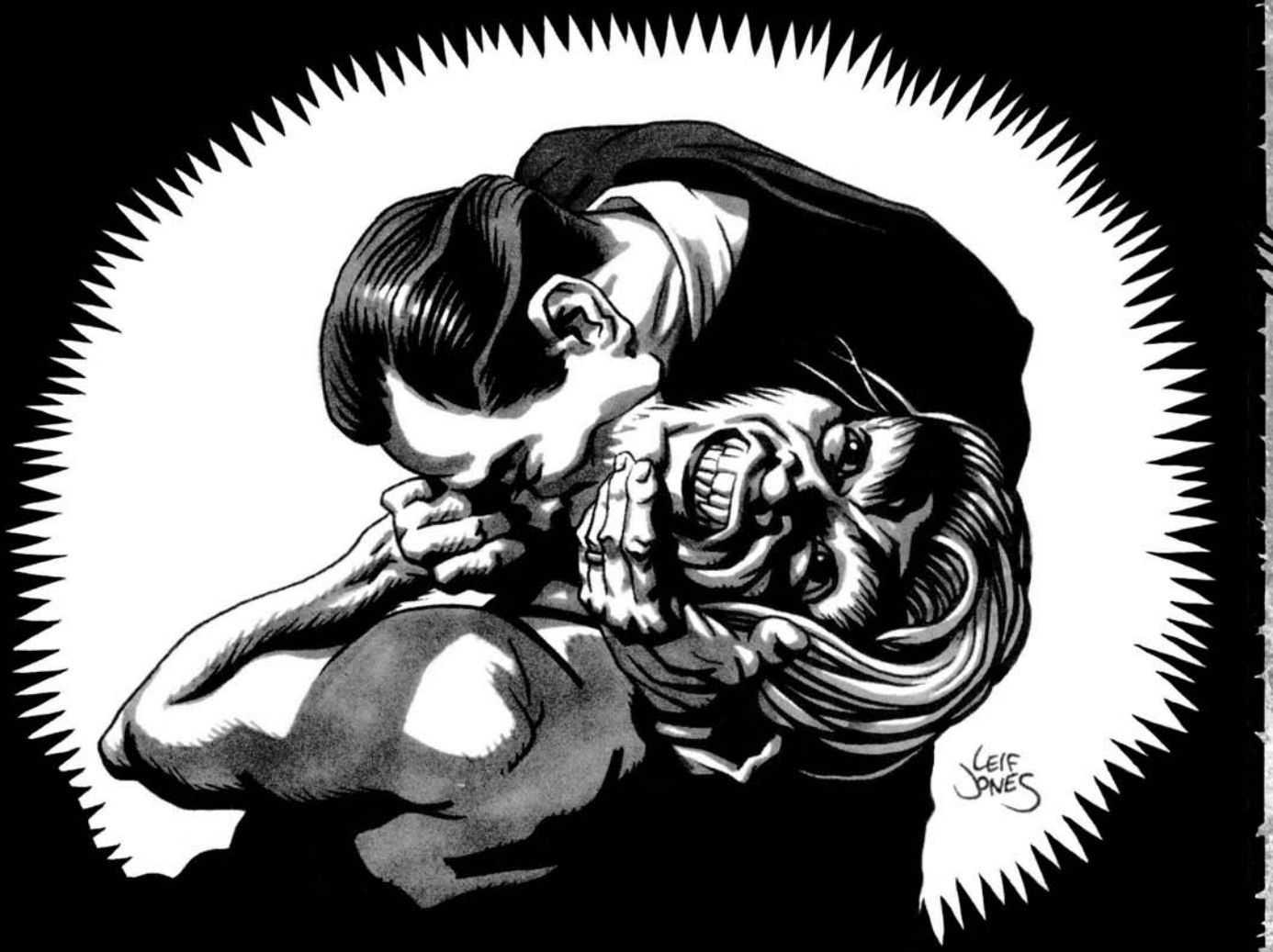
Well, you can guess how well that worked. Phillips didn't take to the turning, and wound up just dying outright instead. From what I can tell that's a really shitty way to go, and the insult of it was enough that the Fangs got really pissed when they found out. Now, keep in mind that I still didn't know about any of this. As far as I was concerned it was still business as usual, or at least as close to it as can be expected when you're dealing with rioters in the streets and a city that more or less looks like a war zone. So when the Fangs showed up on my doorstep, demanding to know how I could let this happen, I didn't have a clue what they were talking about. When I said as much, they called me a liar, and tried to pull some Litany shit on me insulting my honor, calling me a traitor, blah blah blah. They told me the cub had been here, that he was chasing "my" vampire, and that I'd let him get killed. And I told them that, gee, it might have helped things along a bit if they'd bothered to clue me in about it, because good ol' Justin didn't see fit to keep me in the loop.

When they finally figured out that they weren't gonna get anywhere with me, the Fangs got bored and continued on their merry way. But they were out for blood, no question. They demanded to know everything I knew about "my" vampire (calling the shitstain mine was really getting irritating at this point), because they were intent on cleaning house. I figured hey, why not? That's what I'd wanted from the beginning, and if the goddamn lieutenant hadn't been such a sanctimonious prick when this started we might have wrapped all of this up a week ago. The Fangs didn't have much to say about that. But they were on board, more or less, so long as we followed their lead.

Well, I mentioned this to Chris, saying that losing their dear little rising star seemed to get them a bit upset. And Chris smiles a bit, and he says, "Yeah. Looks like that phone call really paid off."

So I sat there staring at him like an idiot, and said "What are you talking about?" I knew at that point that something was very wrong. Something clicked in my head, and I said to him "Holy shit. What the hell did you do?"

Chris got a bit defensive and said, "Look, the Fangs weren't going to get involved, remember? You remember that?" I nodded. "So I figure, how do we make that happen? Well, Phillips was right there, just begging me to use him. He thought he was so goddamn smart, remember?" Chris was right about that. Phillips was always an arrogant prick, and thought he knew everything about operating in the city. "So he gets a call from a concerned sept member, saying that all of this vamp business might be a good way to gain a bit of prestige. Score a coup for the Fangs, you know? Prove they live up to the hype, that they're still the mighty Garou they want us to think they are, and rub our faces in the dirt in the process. He wanted it so bad, Sean, you should have heard him. He would have done something stupid even without my prompting; I just pointed him in the right direction."



This part didn't freak me out. I figured Chris had pulled something like that, because we do it all the time. If someone's gonna be stupid, might as well have 'em be useful about it. But that wasn't what he was talking about, and I knew it. It was the next part that really chilled me. "Anyway, I didn't just want him involved; the Fangs would just leave him be if he went off on his own. He'd kill some ghouls, the trail would run dry, and that'd be it. But if something happened to the guy, if the vamp made an example of him, that'd be different. Take out their glory boy, and the Fangs would take notice."

Now I was freaking out, because I had a really bad feeling about this. "Jesus Christ, Chris, what the hell did you do?" I was shouting now, and other cops were staring at us. Chris told me to keep my voice down, and then let the other shoe drop.

He said, "Look, all I did was drop a few hints to a couple of the vamp's boys, alright? I told them what the Fang was doing, and how to stop him." Chris grinned. "It was so easy, man! Phillips couldn't have been any more predictable, and he just waltzed right into the vamp's hands!" I couldn't believe it — Chris was actually proud of himself.

I started wondering how this could have happened, but it wasn't surprising. Chris knew I would have vetoed this plan if I'd known about it, because that's a type of politics I just don't wanna play. But as my beta, he could get away with it — as long as I didn't know about the plan, I could deny our involvement all the way to hell and back, and there wasn't a thing the Fangs could do about it. And to be fair, it was a perfect plan — assuming I wanted the Fangs to suffer. But I didn't want that. I didn't want them coming down on us like a ton of bricks, and I didn't wanna see a Garou get torn apart just because he was young and stupid. But it was too late now — the deed was done, and whether I knew about it or not I had to keep it quiet; blabbing wouldn't accomplish anything, and if I ratted him out I'd get burned just as bad as him. So I kept quiet. But I also made damn sure that Chris knew that this just wasn't acceptable behavior, and that there'd be hell to pay if he pulled any shit like this again.

Once the Fangs got organized, the rest of us split up to help them hunt the lackeys down, one by one. Finding the vamp to begin with was pretty tricky; the little bastards didn't want to talk — they never do — and it took some potent Gifts to loosen their tongues enough that we began

to put together the Leech's movements. When those faltered, I stepped in; I have no real qualms against getting medieval on a suspect, providing he's rotten enough to deserve it, and these punks definitely qualified. After they'd gone a few rounds with a blowtorch they were singing like canaries, and it didn't take much before we had a good idea as to where the vamp was hiding out.

As we worked, we slowly began to realize that taking this guy down wouldn't be easy. He was pretty high rank by vamp standards, and like all the older sorts he had a lot of contingency plans in place to deal with situations like these. But these were mainly meant to deal with human or vampire threats, not Garou ones. With the Fangs leading us, we had the resources we needed to dismantle his power base piece by piece, to the point where we eventually locked him down in a basement somewhere until we could deal with him during the day. That's when things really began to get hopping.

Unfortunately, finding the vamp was the easy part. Most bloodsuckers go up like kindling during the day, but this one had built his crypt so that he could act during daylight hours without exposing himself to sunlight; that made fighting him difficult. Making things worse was the fact that he had some well-armed lackeys working for him, and it took us awhile to deal with them since they were firing Uzis filled with silver bullets. You'd think he knew the area or something. While they kept us busy, the vampire himself used his own Gifts to hide himself in the darkness. He would snipe at us while we tried to deal with his ghouls, and that made every inch of ground we gained cost us big time. But it was only a matter of time before we finished the cannon fodder, and the vamp knew it. His fear made him sloppy, but that didn't make him any less dangerous: He had some really potent gifts working for him, and he took a couple of the Fangs down before the fight was done. The worst part, the part that really freaked us out, was the fact that the bastard had *removed his heart!* The Silver Fang sept leader thought he had the battle in the bag when he staked the guy through the chest; that should have been the end of it, really, since that usually stakes the bastards outright, letting us dismantle them at leisure. But the vamp just laughed at him and gutted him like a fish. We were all in Crinos by that point, so the rest of us swallowed our fear, grabbed him, dragged him into the sunlight, and watched him go *poof*. It didn't take long for him to go up.

Once the vamp was killed, things settled down pretty quickly. The underlings were all gone, so it didn't take long for us to spread out and restore some semblance of sanity to the streets. We managed to round up most of the product he'd dumped, and that made me relax a bit. There was a lot of that shit floating around, and no way to control it once it hit the major distribution points. We also got some lines on other vampire activities back east. The Fangs took care of that end of things, since it wasn't really our jurisdiction.

Even though we'd managed to quiet things down, the battle with the vamp still cost us. We'd lost a few good sept members on the street, but the Fangs had lost more — and their losses were major. They'd lost their golden boy, which hurt them, and they also lost the leader of their sept. That crippled them as far as Garou politics were concerned, so I guess that Chris' call was the right one to make. We got a bigger say in how things are run here, and the new regime doesn't revolve around kowtowing to the Fangs every time something happens. Now we're basically the first among equals — everyone does what we say, but they do it because we're showing them it can be done, not because we're telling them what to do. And I tell myself that, because of that, things are better. The old regime is out, and now we're all about getting things done instead of standing on ceremony. And that's the whole point, isn't it?

I say that, but it doesn't change the fact that it's damn hard to look in the mirror these days. Things may be better now, but they were paid for with innocent blood, and I can't believe that's okay. That can't be what Gaia wants. I know we're in a war for survival here, and that we occasionally have to do things we may not be proud of, but… that just doesn't excuse it. That's not a free pass to whack anyone we care to just because it's convenient. We still gotta remember that we're human beings, at least in part, and we have to act like it. If we can't manage that, then maybe we don't deserve to survive.

We Lords have always been kinda out there, doing questionable things in the name of the greater good. And Chris' actions were classic Shadow Lord behavior — do what needs to be done so your alpha doesn't have to, and worry mainly about fixing the problem at hand. If there are consequences, so be it — suck 'em up and deal with 'em, assuming anyone calls you on your actions. But we gotta keep some perspective here. All we really accomplished these last few weeks was to take down some glorified crack dealer, and at the cost of a lot of Garou lives — and I can't think of anything short of wiping out an entire Hive that really justifies that many Garou dying. What's the point? How does that serve Gaia? I don't have any answers, but I do know that something's gotta change. We can't keep going on like this; if we do, we won't need the Wyrm to drag us into the Apocalypse — we'll do a fine job of bringing it on ourselves.

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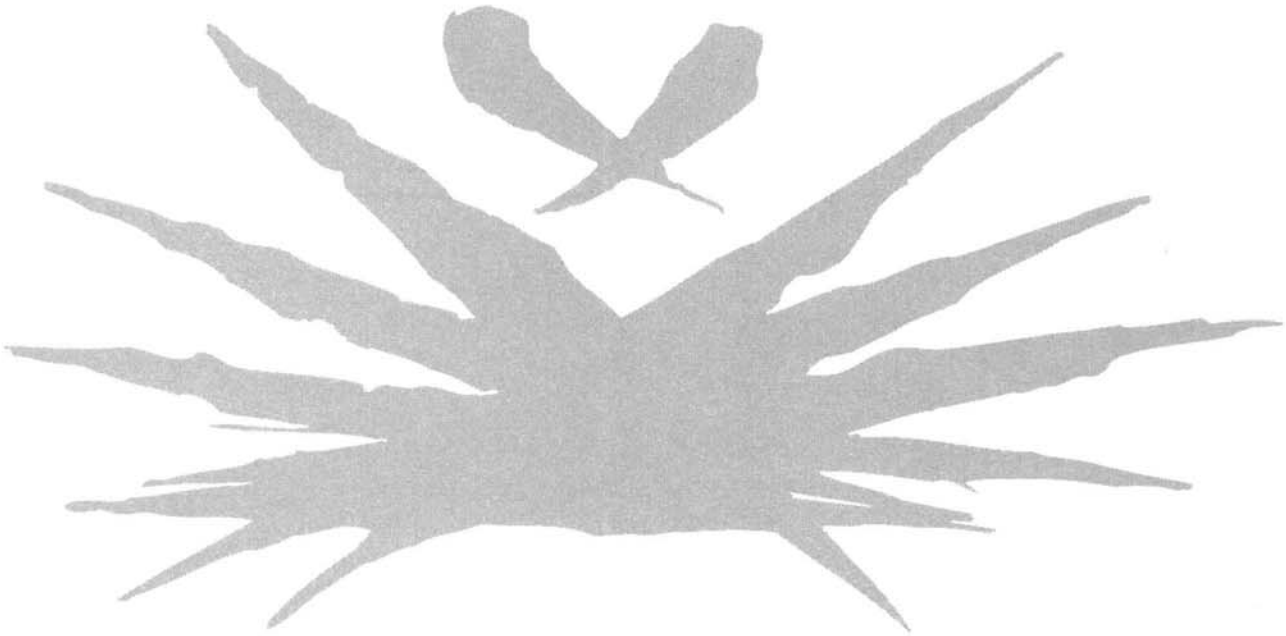

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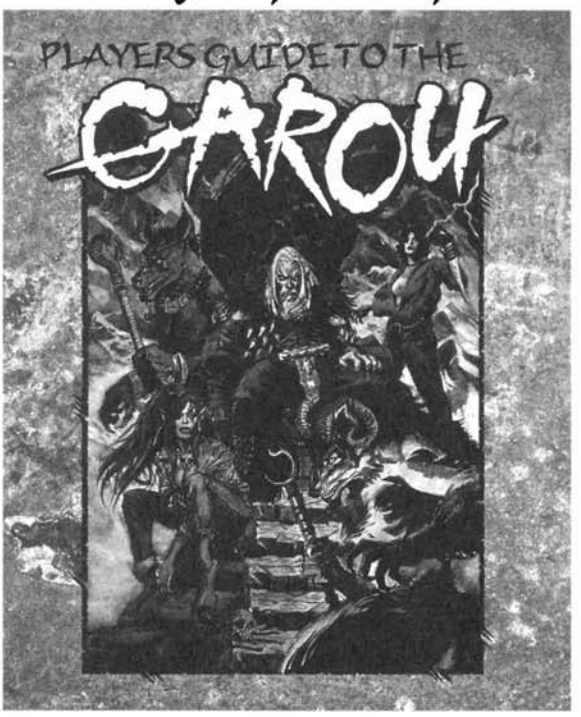

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PAUL SPENCER '02

Chapter One: The Winds of History

If you don't like us, don't accept our invitations, and don't invite us to come and see you. Whether you like it or not, history is on our side.
— Nikita Sergeyevich Kruschev

Well now, you seem to have survived your Rite of Passage relatively intact. No serious injuries, I take it? No acts of shame to disgrace the tribe so early into your tenure as one of us? No? Good. That is no doubt why they have sent you to old Pavel, so that they can keep the shifty Galliard off their backs by saddling him with a cub. No matter; in doing so they give me power, so it is of no real consequence to me. Hmmm? No, never mind. I was just thinking out loud.

So, what you need now is a bit of history, so that you can effectively situate yourself in the tapestry of Shadow Lord affairs. You've already heard the basics, I'm sure, but you still need to have them fleshed out a bit so that you can understand why we are the way we are. What you should remember here is that a dozen histories of our tribe are recorded in various places, and few of them agree on the details of our past. We are meticulous scribes, but we are also a pack of liars, so take anything you hear from me with a grain of salt. It doesn't really matter if this detail or that is perfectly accurate, anyway, since it's the meaning of these sorts of things that is important.

Ah, distant thunder. It is the sweetest sound in the world, with all the things it whispers to us. That is where we begin — in the fires of creation.

The Beginning

You hear much talk nowadays about the first times, and what the Garou were like when Gaia made the world. In truth, I suspect that the Garou weren't much like anything at that time, since we weren't around. The world went through many, many ages before Gaia felt the need to create us. There were no Garou during the time of the dinosaurs, nor even when the great beasts of Gaia's past ruled over the Earth. The past was a time of spirit and balance, and all was as it should have been.

As time rolled by and Gaia's creative persona, the Weaver, took to creating newer forms, two beings began to take prominence. One of these was the wolf, which proved to be one of the most adaptive of Gaia's creations. It was soon found all over the world, or at least in all the places worth noting (that's not entirely true, but I'll get to the why of that later). Gaia was pleased with it. It was a rapacious predator, but fiercely devoted to its family. The other animals of the world adjusted to accommodate it, and all was well.

Soon, however, another of Gaia's creations began to rise in importance. These were humans, who were smart and strong and resilient, and could make tools, and learn. They had a weird, extended society, and so they were very greedy. They needed to be, to gain any status and do well by their offspring. So they used all of their gifts to bend Gaia to their will, and they proved to be quite successful. Their success was such that they learned to reach beyond the shackles their environment placed upon them, and this gave them a degree of freedom and security undreamed of by other living things. This was a grand thing for humans; it was not, however, particularly good for Gaia. It was in fact quite awful for Her, and the machinations of humanity changed the world forever. I'm sure many Theurges would disagree with me, but I am convinced that this is the point where the Severing occurred — the point where Gaia was separated into a physical realm (that is, the world around you) and the Umbra, a realm of spirit. Many animals and spirits alike felt the loss keenly — I don't think the humans ever really noticed.

That is why Gaia created Garou to control the humans. She gave us the form and temperament of wolves, and the minds and hearts of men, and bade us walk among both. This was an error on Her part, since wolves that are not with their families are just as wicked and domineering as any humans are. But then, perhaps that was Her intention all along — perhaps the only way to control the humans was to loose upon them a predator whose cruelty and ferocity were that much greater than anything humanity had to offer. If that is so, then the results of Her little experiment cannot have surprised Her.

The many Garou Gaia created obeyed Her wishes to the best of their ability. Some of us made war on the humans, seeking to crush them under our heels. Some lived with the humans in peace, becoming advisors and counselors so that humans might go about their business wisely. Still others became a part of human society, and ruled them from within. All these things and more we did, because it was Gaia's will that it be so. But She was not the only one watching. There were other beings of power that served Her interests, and some of these took it upon themselves to mold us in their image.

The Garou that would become the Shadow Lords settled among the peoples of the great plains of Asia. That was a wild land, and it was teeming with endless multitudes of people. We quickly realized that it would be impossible to control them directly, so we did the next best thing — we controlled their dynasties from within, making ourselves invaluable to whomever happened to be in charge at the time and moving on to better prospects when newcomers took their place. It was in this way that we maintained our place, ruling humanity from the shadows through guile and treachery. We became masters of hidden power, and in so doing attracted the interest of the mightiest of Gaia's Incarnae, the one we know today as Grandfather Thunder. He saw in us the essence of himself: the rumblings of distant thunder, the smoldering anger that explodes in a summer storm, the hidden darkness that turns day to night. He came to us, and bade us serve him so that we might better serve Gaia. We could not refuse; while others might look upon Thunder's dark rumblings with suspicion, we saw only guile and cunning and wisdom. By accepting his blessings, we became a political force in our own right. In forging a bond with us, he gave birth to our tribe just as Gaia had given birth to our physical forms in centuries past.

Tribes and the Impergium

Just as Grandfather Thunder chose us, so too did other, lesser totems choose other factions of Garou. This was the birth of the tribes as we know them. Some Galliards claim that the tribes were

formed first, and that they were strengthened by the patronage of totems later — but that is insulting to the great Incarnae who have offered their might to our people.

There are always factions — there always were, and there always will be. The camps of our tribe and others, the secret cults and alliances that attempt to keep themselves hidden, all of these are gatherings of like-minded Garou that seek a common end. But those are not tribes. You will hear some Galliards claim that the tribes arose from factions formed by the Impergium, that the Children of Gaia were all objectors or that the Black Furies were those who insisted on culling only males. These claims are worthless. The tribes were formed at the beginning of the Impergium — the task we were created to perform — not towards the end. The role each tribe played in the culling was an evolution of their tribal goals and beliefs, rather than the other way around.

It would be a mistake not to tell you of the Silver Fangs in those earliest times. With Falcon the oh-so-noble as their patron, they claimed the right of leadership. And they *were* well suited to the task; they bred well, they carried themselves with dignity, they had clear voices and they could stir the emotions of those that lived under them. As with the humans, we looked at the Silver Fangs and we saw that it was best not to vie with them for control, but to reinforce — and subtly guide — their rule for the good of the newly forming Nation. They were not perfect, but they were fitting alphas, and we forged a strong alliance with them. While they spoke, we acted; while they led the vanguard, we struck from the flanks. We dirtied our hands so that they could continue to gleam silver, the seemingly flawless leaders. We made sacrifices of blood and honor so that they could shine; it hurt, but it was worth it to see the Fangs rally the tribes into unity. Ours was a good partnership... which made it all the more frustrating when it went sour.

The War of Rage

Now, we Garou were not the only instruments Gaia made to enforce Her will. No, there were many, many other Breeds, the Fera, looking to do Her work, and as we encountered them we made to rule them as well. It was our pride that drove us to this, and in its way it was the way of the wolf made manifest. Each of these different Breeds had gifts bestowed upon them by Gaia, and we knew that we had to make use of those gifts if we were to control the humans effectively. We had to see the world with Gaia's Eyes, to see the past with Her Memory, and to hear of distant wonders from Her Messengers. We could not appreciate these things for their own sake, so we tried to take them for our own.

The other Fera were incensed at the very idea of submitting to our will, and they responded by turning their backs on their duties to Gaia altogether. After all, we were Her favored children. If this was how we acted, why should they respect anything She had to say? But in reacting this way, they committed the same sin we had. In our pride, we tried to control them. In their pride, they sought to defy us. Do not let the apologists mislead you: The Fera were as guilty of wrongdoing as we were, every last one of them. What came next might have been our responsibility, but by Gaia, we were *provoked*. If you bait a bear and it attacks you, you have only yourself to blame. And if you defy a creature of rage, you have to expect that you'll be forced to pay the price.

And yet... and yet. When we declared war on the other Fera, I do not think even we understood exactly what it was that we were doing. We destroyed many of them outright, and damaged others such that they would not recover for centuries. Did you know that there used to be werelynxes here in Europe? They were sagacious folk, much like their American kin, but they had a tradition steeped in mysticism and contemplation that we have never seen the like of before or since. And there were others... so many others. Children of Falcon, to hunt the skies, and whispers of Bat to sing the songs of Gaia to us at night. There were werelynxes to teach us wisdom, and great old werebears to heal Gaia's wounds. All of these and more lived among us, until we destroyed them. If they would not bow before us, it was obvious that they had turned their backs on Gaia. Thus, they had to be destroyed.

We did not understand what we were doing, not until it was too late to stop it. But then, we didn't really want to think about it too much. We were the betas of the Garou back then, and we saw it as our duty to carry out the will of our leaders. It was they who found the attitudes of the Fera unacceptable. As such, it was their pride that destroyed the other Fera, not ours. We were just their executioners.

The Concord

While we were busy fighting the other Fera, the humans we ruled were chafing under our oh-so-

The Eternal Grudge

To listen to the other Garou, you'd think the Lords have been plotting to usurp control of the Garou Nation for millennia, for as long as we've called ourselves Shadow Lords. You'd think that we've hated the Silver Fangs forever, and yet haven't ever managed to supplant them. In a word, you'd think we're incompetent.

Let's be real. If we had truly been looking for the perfect opportunity to supplant the Fangs for that long, don't you think we would have found it by now? We're not idiots, and we can call in a lot of favors if we have to. If we'd really hated the Fangs for this long — and been willing to replace them — we wouldn't be sitting here a million years later still playing second-in-command. We would be in control.

But there are two things to remember. One is that we don't all hate the Silver Fangs, nor have we hated them for millennia. But we don't like what they've become. In the old times, we let them have first choice of breeding stock and hunting territories. We became their scapegoats, committing our treacheries so they could rule efficiently without being associated with the shame of dishonorable conduct, no matter how necessary. We did this so they could lead well, so they could play their part. They aren't playing that part any more, and most are too soft and weak in body or head. Do you see where the resentment might come from? Our ancestors sacrificed so much for theirs, and they aren't even grateful. Many of us see a grave injustice in that, and we aren't afraid to act on it.

The second thing is that for all their weaknesses, they are still the Silver Fangs. Their name has been associated with leadership for as long as the People have known tribes, and no matter how many young homid cubs revolt against the idea of traditional leadership, their knees still tremble in the presence of a Fang. Gaia has not denounced them yet, and Falcon still flies above them. If we were sure that they were now useless, that the Nation would be better off with them toppled from the summit, then we would take action against them — but as long as they are still the Silver Fangs, and still show the signs of the chosen, we can never truly be sure.

That is why so many of us resent the Fangs — because we trusted and relied on them for so long, and we feel betrayed. And that is why we have not acted yet — because there may yet be hope for them. But I tell you this: The feelings of resentment aren't getting any weaker, and the hope of their resurrection is fading day by day. We are running out of time to wait.

— Viola the Knife, Shadow Lord Philodox

gentle touch. After three thousand years of subservience to our rule, they thought they were entitled to an opinion. They thought they had the right to challenge us, and to overthrow our authority. We who were children of Thunder found this to be laughable; while we did not view leadership as a right, as the Silver Fangs did, we nonetheless were not prepared to relinquish it under any circumstances. But the humans nonetheless began to take up arms against us, and we had to bow before the realization that the whole situation would get a lot messier than we might care to deal with if something wasn't done soon.

Each tribe tried to deal with the threat of war in its own way. The Fenrir wanted to crush them, while the Silver Fangs wanted to legitimize their rule using legal precedent. The Children of Gaia wanted to negotiate a truce, and the Warders wanted to rule them from within. As for ourselves, we wanted to use humanity's own penchant for politics and violence against it, using humanity to control humanity.

Ultimately, we all failed to put the wretched creatures down. They had grown beyond our ability to control, and the only options left to us were to let them go or to simply annihilate them. Some tribes found the latter option acceptable, but most of us did not. And so, each tribe shifted the blame for our failure to the others, and in so doing the tensions between us grew until we exploded into open conflict among ourselves. We, who were created to pacify the humans, ourselves fell victim to the portions of ourselves that *were* human.

Eventually, we more or less came to terms on how we'd deal with the situation. We agreed to live in peace, and we agreed to end the Impergium. Never again, we said, would we make war against one another, or the other Fera, or the humans. We would only do as Gaia commanded, and do our best to control the humans from within.

It was the worst mistake we ever made.

The Rise of Humanity

As our pressure on humanity began to ebb, the humans became free to develop their culture and their land as they saw fit. We thus saw the beginnings of civilization several thousand years ago, in places like Southeast Asia, Mesopotamia, and scattered regions throughout Africa. Human civilization was no place for us, at least not yet, and so we stayed away. We hoped that the Warders and the Ratkin (who we didn't manage to kill during the War of Rage, despite our best efforts) would keep the humans in check, but both proved to be rather pitiful when it came to doing their jobs. It wasn't terribly surprising, but it was disappointing nonetheless. Even then, it was hard to find good help.

Human civilization continued to grow and change, and they began to develop technology at an alarming rate. It was bad enough when the apes went and developed agriculture, but soon they were coming up with innovative new irrigation techniques, new and better metals for use in tools and weapons, We watched the rise and fall of many civilizations, and tentatively began to get involved in the development of each. Sumeria, Egypt, the Hittites, Greece, Babylon — all were fascinating experiments in the development of humanity. But things didn't really start hopping until Rome rose to power. That was when the game we Lords excel at was refined to a high art, but it was also when the world went straight to hell.

Rome

What was that? Ah. No, Nero wasn't a product of our influence. Neither was Caligula. None of Rome's emperors were, actually. Everyone thinks they should be, but the truth of the matter is that the emperors weren't really that interesting to us. Sure, they had the power to control the empire, but they were too high profile. No, the ones who were intriguing from a Shadow Lord viewpoint were the senators. Human and Shadow Lord alike refined the fine art of politics during Rome's early days, and as the Empire neared its end we'd turned it into a science.

Now, the Romans weren't our people. Our Kin lay with the barbarian tribes farther north, and so didn't make it to the Empire until shortly before its collapse. In point of fact, our Kin were the indigenous people who resided in Central Asia before the barbarian migrations began, but things got so mixed around that the people who would become the Slavs became our *de facto* Kin during the later

stages of the Roman Empire. But we still took an interest in the Empire, as it was filled with men who thirsted for power and were willing to do all the politicking and warmongering necessary to take and hold that power. So we found them to be fascinating folk, and made sure to follow their activities as best we could.

In addition to politics, we learned a heck of a lot about tactics and military strategy from the early days of the Roman Empire. Of particular importance were the Punic Wars, where such notables as Hannibal, Scipio Africanus, and a number of others made their names and taught us lessons which are still quite useful even today. We played both sides of the fence there, instigating battles here and there just to see what the humans would do. Anyone who could come up with the idea of massing elephants in northern Africa, marching them through Spain and Gaul and into Northern Italy, and then using them for an attack on Rome just has to be admired. Anyone who could *defeat* someone with such a brilliant idea should practically be worshipped as a god. And so, we stuck with them, because they were fascinating creatures.

Sadly, our understanding of the inner workings of human politics didn't do much to help us to control them. We had to rely increasingly on Kin intermediaries to get results — it was never a city that was easy on a werewolf's nerves — and predictably, those Kin were not as efficient as we would have been ourselves. The Empire continued to expand, and there wasn't much we could do about it. Assassination helped a lot, though. If not for that, which we practiced regularly, the Empire might have expanded far beyond its already significant historical size. As things stood, we had to be content with forcing the Empire to crumble somewhere in the middle of the 6th century AD.

Christianity, or How the World Went to Hell

On the subject of Anno Domini, one of the most important developments of the Roman era was the rise of Christianity. This faith marked a turning point in the development of human thought, and it had a massive impact on our way of life for three main reasons. First, it developed the monotheistic deity concept to a point where it gained widespread acceptance among all of Western humanity. While Judaism introduced the idea, it was Christianity that truly popularized it and made it accessible to humans of all ethnic backgrounds. As its influence grew, the influence of other faiths necessarily decreased. Further, its exclusivity made its more zealous adherents prone to acts of extreme violence, both against their fellow humans and against supernatural entities like us. As the faith's power grew, life in Europe became extremely unpleasant for us.

Christianity was also important because it represented the early roots of institutionalization, where a religious or political idea becomes an entity with power beyond the people that adhere to it. Christianity wasn't just about the Roman Empire; it was about the Church. This was a concept we were utterly unprepared to deal with, just because of the sheer scale of the thing. The world was a much smaller place at the time, and it was difficult for us to understand that a non-political institution could exercise such great control over so significant an area. If we control an aristocrat, we might control a house or a town. If we control a senator, we control a region. If we control a king, we control all the lands he counts as his own. This is straightforward enough. But if we control an institution like the Church... we control everyone who is a part of that institution. It reaches beyond political boundaries, beyond cultural barriers, beyond everything we know of and touches everyone in the world. If we could control that, the power at our disposal, the power to influence humanity, would be enormous. Sadly, someone beat us to the punch.

You see, the third impact Christianity had on our way of life lay with the vampires that quickly sprang up within it. These foul beings were steeped in human culture to a degree we couldn't even begin to duplicate, and they realized the potential the Church had to offer just as quickly as we did. The fact that they could create progeny at will gave them numbers we couldn't match, and so of course their influence spread like wildfire.

We had dealt with vampires before, of course. They were all over the place in Rome, but they had to be careful since they couldn't very well control anyone important — senators can't restrict their activities to nighttime, after all, which meant that we maintained an edge of sorts in Rome itself. But the Christians were not centralized, and that made them much easier to control than the nice, centralized Roman government was. Something had to be done.

The Importance of a Good Sacking

Well, as it happened plenty *was* done. There were quite a few ambitious individuals in the barbarian tribes running around beyond Rome's borders, and it didn't take much prompting to get our Kin to start invading the Empire like it was a mandate from on high. The invasions came in waves, hammering away at the Empire's defenses. The Visigoths kicked things off by invading Italy in about AD 400 or so, and the Vandals followed it up by sacking Rome fifty years later. A half-dozen other tribes got involved in the fray over the course of two hundred years or so, giving the Romans trouble everywhere from Britain down to Carthage.

During the course of the invasions, the Vandals, Visigoths, and Huns wound up migrating through much of what would become Germany, France, Spain, Italy, and Eastern Europe. We went with them, to a greater or lesser extent, both to keep an eye on them and to see just how much they might be able to accomplish. The upshot of all of this is that our Kin, and we along with them, wound up pretty thoroughly distributed throughout the Empire and all of its holdings, at least in the west. This is the first reason why we now have caerns scattered across North Africa, Spain, and parts of France and Italy, in addition to our tribal homelands. Most Garou are surprised to find that we're so diverse, but, well, there you go. The idea that results were more important than ethnic "purity" has been imbedded in our tribe forever, and this was simply one of the larger pieces of evidence.

As a side note here, I want to point out that the Huns weren't really involved in taking down the Empire, and that they never sacked Rome. The farthest they got, in fact, was Northern Italy, and that was long after the Visigoths and the Vandals had been making life miserable for the Empire for the better part of a century. Some Glass Walker once told me that Attila marched into Rome on a bunch of elephants, which is utter nonsense. I'm not even sure where the Huns were supposed to have gotten the elephants, seeing as how they came from Central Asia, and never got much father than Turkey in the south and France in the west. You'd think with all their access to technology that the Walkers would open a book now and then.

Anyway, what's important to note here is that these weren't just a bunch of crude barbarians; on the contrary, they were enormously sophisticated people, and they gave rise to a number of kingdoms which have matured into the European countries we recognize today. We saw the potential they represented even this early in the game, and turning them loose on a crumbling and rotten empire to fracture Christianity and give the tribes some power just seemed like a win-win situation from our point of view. What we didn't count on was two things: first, that the empire would go and split into two parts shortly before the invasions, thus leaving at least part of it intact; and second, that another religion would spring from Judaism, this one centered in the Middle East. This new religion was Islam, and it became the next big thing in the world.

The So-Called Dark Ages

Perhaps I am simply thin-skinned, but I happen to take exception to the notion that the period following the sacking of Rome was a particularly "dark" time. It wasn't dark. It was, in fact, one of the most fascinating periods in all of human history. With the fall of Rome, a number of competing kingdoms rose up to take its place. In Iberia (which would become Spain), the kingdom of the Visigoths was rising to power. The Vandals retained their hold on the northern coast of Africa, and the Ostrogoths took over what remained of the western Roman Empire. The northern regions were consolidated under the Franks, which gave the Fianna a home. Britain, for its part, was just sacked, and it actually *was* pretty dull. But in the east... oh my.

Byzantium

The eastern Roman Empire became the Byzantine Empire, and this would recapture much of Rome's lost glory. The most notable of its emperors was Justinian, who was Shadow Lord Kin. He was a guileful sort, but not very bright. His wife Theodora, however, was another story, and she was one of ours. She encouraged him to recapture much of Rome's past prominence, and he did a fair job of it. He also codified Roman law, turning it into one of the best legal codes ever developed, and did a fair job of bolstering the eastern branch of Christianity, which never became as ambitious or as problematic as its western counterpart. Sadly, he couldn't hold his territories against the Germanic tribes to the north or the Persians to the east, so the empire was eventually worn away. Oh well. Nobody's perfect.

The Balkans

One of the reasons we took such an interest in the Byzantine Empire lies in the fact that its primary power centers were for the most part right on our

front doorstep. It never quite made it to the Visigoth homelands, but it was pretty close. This made the Byzantines nice and accessible to us, and that made it one of our fondest memories. Sadly, it was infested with vampires, and they did a fine job of using the Empire's power to crush its citizenry. I think that Justinian and his Shadow Lord wife were the only people in power that weren't bloodsuckers. When the Empire faltered, the vampires retreated to the Balkans, and as I'll explain later they became quite problematic there.

Islam

As I said awhile ago, the growth of Islam soon became the next big thing in the world. It began in the Middle East, but soon grew to encompass territory from Afghanistan to, believe it or not, Spain. Throughout the middle of the 8th century Islamic power continued to increase, and for the most part we just watched it grow. It didn't seem to be fettered with the same vampiric woes as the Christian states, and with the exception of the Spanish and North African regions (particularly those west of Tripoli) it wasn't a setting that was rich with our Kin. Many of us traveled through the area just to see what it had to offer, but the few Garou in the area were mostly Silent Striders, and there was no real place for our Kin throughout the Eastern Caliphate. The West, however, was another matter.

The Arabs proved to be quite successful in their conquest of Northern Africa, which was rather unpleasant for us. Their military might was all but unstoppable, and they managed to handily destroy the kingdom the Vandals had established there some two hundred years before. As they consolidated their power they also destroyed Carthage, along with a good many of our own Kin. Years later, they invaded the Iberian Peninsula, which they would hold for many years, and in so doing destroyed the kingdom of the Visigoths as well; what Kin we had there were either assimilated by the Arabs or forced to flee northward into the Kingdom of the Franks. While our homelands were safe, at least from the Arabs, our extended Kinfolk network was being crushed.

Despite the destruction visited upon our Kin, some of the Lords in Spain couldn't help but admire the invading Arabs. They had come all the way from Mecca, grinding all that stood in their way to dust, all for the glory of their faith. While Christianity sought to unify the world and bend Gaia to its will, Islam seemed content to destroy their human opponents, learning about the world around

them only to the extent that it furthered their religious goals. The strength and ambition they displayed could win the affection of even the most hardened Lord, and many chose to remain in Toledo or Cordoba just so they could learn more about this new and alien culture.

While the Islamic Empire initially seemed like an unstoppable juggernaut, a number of key defeats at Tours, Constantinople, and Cyprus halted their forward momentum. The empires would persist for several hundred years, but they would never regain their forward momentum on Western European soil. This left our Spanish Kin free to return to their territories, and the Lords from that region (and their descendents in the Americas) yet retain a Moorish cast to their features.

Charlemagne

The last great stab at an empire in Europe came at the hands of Charlemagne, a Frankish king who sought to unify lands from Iberia to the Slavic states containing our homelands into a renewed empire on the scale of classical Rome. It was a noble effort, and much of that empire's former glory was restored. In the meantime, the Slavic peoples that now populated the majority of our homelands had to deal with invasions from the Bulgarians in the east and the Scandinavians from the north. These latter people set up trade routes between their homeland and Constantinople, and in the process created permanent settlements along these trade routes. These three influences — Slavic, Bulgarian, and Scandinavian — created the culture which now dominates Eastern Europe, and the Scandinavians themselves gave rise to Russia.

Unfortunately, the only thing holding the empire together was Charlemagne himself. When he died in 814, the empire fractured into three parts, one of which was the Holy Roman Empire. This particular state is noteworthy due to the fact that it was not particularly holy, wasn't Roman, and certainly wasn't an empire. It was, however, a potent political force in Europe for several centuries, and it was ultimately responsible for creating one of the most horrific individuals the world has ever seen. I'll get back to Vlad a bit later, though; plenty of history between now and then to get through first.

The Crusades

As the proto-nation states of Europe began to vie for power, they sponsored some fairly silly endeavors. One of these was the conquest of the Middle East. It wasn't enough that they'd managed to halt the Islamic advance into Europe — no, now they had to force the Arabs back to Mesopotamia, and retake the city of Jerusalem. There was no point to any of this, really. It was just Christian zealots throwing their weight around, and in all likelihood it was also a way to give fighting men something to do so that no one would raise an army and go threaten the ruling families. And of course, our homelands became their stomping grounds, since we were right there on the way to the Holy Land. I mention this because it explains some of the things that happened later, which I'll get to in a short while.

There were eight Crusades in total, but only the first one could really be called a success. Unfortunately for the Christians, the Muslims were much stronger than their opponents, and had no trouble whatsoever retaking the Christian conquests once they finally got around to it. For all the Crusaders' self-glorification, the Muslims didn't seem to even notice their efforts.

Interestingly, while the Crusades were going on, a huge amount of information and trade was reaching Europe from Islamic sources. This included a fair amount of the knowledge Europe lost when Rome fell, which had been preserved and expanded by the Islamic heirs to Rome's power. This sparked the infamous Renaissance, which hit Europe right about the time the Mongols started seriously kicking the crap out of Asia.

The Mongol Horde

The Mongol influence in Asia was nothing new. Our own ancestors are not too far removed from the Mongols themselves, and they'd been sending incursions into Europe for quite some time. The Golden Horde took and held Russia for much of its history, and the Bulgarians who invaded the Slavic states during Charlemagne's reign were an offshoot of that Tartar invasion. By the time the 12th century rolled around, the Mongols held nearly all of Asia, and they had their eyes set on points farther west. It wasn't long before they sacked Baghdad, crushing the power of the Islamic Caliphates, and Hungary felt their power soon after. We and our Kin were right in the thick of the invasion, and if the accounts are even half true the Mongols were the most terrifying military force ever fielded. What's more, they were, for the most part, entirely human.

While we fought the Mongols as best we could, many of us nevertheless had to admire their sound grasp of tactics and their unrelenting ferocity. This

The Mongol Lords

The Shadow Lords were not the only ones who admired the Mongols' ferocity. Their spiritual brethren, the Hakken, were enamored with them as well, to the point where some groups assimilated themselves into the Mongol culture. These Garou, children of Grandfather Thunder just as the Shadow Lords are, ruled the battlefield like no others, and many rose to positions of power and prestige as the Mongols embarked on their quest to rule all of Asia.

The Mongol Lords reside in a strange middle ground between east and west; they are descended from the Hakken, but have little in common with the Beast Courts of the East. They are culturally similar to the Shadow Lords of the West, but have no real ties with the tribe. They are truly a breed apart.

If you are running a chronicle using the **Werewolf: the Dark Ages** setting, it is quite appropriate to include the Mongol Lords if you feel that doing so will enrich the story. For game purposes, treat the Mongol Lords as you would the Western Shadow Lords; their gifts, rites, and general social structure are very similar. Always remember, however, that they are *not* Western Shadow Lords. They have very different roots, and view the Western Lords as distant cousins at best. Despite the similarities between their culture and that of their Western brethren, the Mongol Lords identify with the Hakken to a much greater extent.

was a people whose idea of diplomacy included razing resistant cities to the ground and slaughtering all who dared oppose them, with no thought whatsoever to mercy or compassion. We hated them with a passion, of that there's no doubt, but at the same time we learned a great deal from them, and the hatred and resolve they taught us would prove to be extremely useful in the years to come.

The Ottoman Empire

The fallout from the Mongol conquest of Asia was enormous. Many of the effects of such a campaign are obvious, but one of the most significant developments was the flood of refugees that invaded Asia Minor, then called Anatolia. Most of these were Turkic speaking peoples, and in the wake of the fall of the Islamic Caliphates a number of Turkish warlords made bids for power within the region, turning it into a war zone. It was inevitable that one ruler or another would eventually gain the upper hand, and the resulting unification of the Turkish tribes gave rise to the Ottoman Empire. Capitalizing on much of the ideology and infrastructure of the Islamic states, the Ottomans became one of the more enduring empires in Asia Minor, and their influence on the development of our tribe was incalculable.

In response to the threat posed by the Ottomans, the Holy Roman Emperor created the Order of the Dragon, a semi-military and religious society operating along the same lines as the Teutonic Knights or the Hospitalers of Saint John. The mandate of the order was to repulse the Turks in Eastern Europe, and the knights inducted by the Emperor did so to the best of their ability. One of these knights, of course, was Vlad Dracul — the father of the being the world would come to know as Vlad Tepes, or Dracula.

During this time, our Kin decided that they'd had enough of being kicked around. They had to deal with invasions by the Bulgarians, the Scandinavians, the crusading knights, the Mongols, and a host of lesser threats over the course of centuries. We Shadow Lords thought this was all quite interesting, since ambitions ran high during the course of every invasion and the opportunities for digging our claws into human politics were many and delightful. But even we had to feel sympathy for our Kin when the Turks began their campaigns. These were a people who, like their Arab forebears, were completely alien to us, and their penchant for conquest and bloodshed were such that we simply could not stand by and watch our Kin be slaughtered. We had to get involved somehow, even if it meant allying ourselves with a monster.

Dracula didn't begin life as the beast legend remembers him as. He was initially a fairly unremarkable man, who followed his father to the throne of Wallachia (a portion of Hungary that would later become the heart of Romania) in 1437. For political reasons, however, he was kidnapped by the Ottomans five years later, and held by them for another six years beyond that (when his father was assassinated). Seventeen years old, Vlad's thirst for vengeance led him to join with the Turks in a campaign to hunt down his father's assassins, and for a time the son of Dracul seemed to be satisfied.

At this point, our Kin thought they might finally enjoy some peace under a strong ruler. As it turned out, however, this was anything but true. In fact, Dracula proved to be a man of incalculable cruelty, one who delighted in devising all manner of

tortures for the people who opposed him. His favorite punishment was impalement, which of course led to his title of Vlad Tepes — Vlad the Impaler. It is assumed by many versed in supernatural affairs that Vlad's vampirism was the source of his cruelty, but this is not the case. Far from it — the son of Dracul only attracted the attention of the fiends that plagued our Kin *because* of his cruelty. After six years of rule, he was finally taken in and turned into a creature of the night. It was then that he chose to turn on his Turkish allies, and it was then that we had to support him.

I'm sure it seems odd that we would throw our support behind one of the cruelest and most malicious vampires the world has ever seen. But you have to remember that our goal as Garou isn't to protect humanity — our goal is to protect Gaia *from* humanity. While we had no particular desire to see our Kin suffer, we nonetheless had to do what we could to undermine whatever human empires were prevalent at the time. There are two reasons: one is that because such empires allowed humans to consolidate their power, and the other is because they gave creatures like vampires a means to embed themselves in institutions in ways which protected them from our claws. And so, oddly, it turned out that in this place, at this time, it made sense to ally ourselves with the Impaler simply because he was fighting against the newest and most successful of the Islamic empires, and undermining the stability of human society in the process. Most importantly, however, was the fact that for once it wasn't our people who were being trampled upon for a change.

Vlad's early campaigns were quite successful. He managed to score many victories along the banks of the Danube River, and forced the Turks back into Bulgaria. However, he was hardly prepared for what came next. The sultan Mehmed II's anger was such that he mounted a full-scale invasion of Wallachia, and it was only then that we realized the depths of our stupidity. You see, Vlad was forced to retreat to the Wallachian capital of Tirgoviste, and it seems his vampiric progenitors had taught him a thing or two about terror. In his efforts to stem the tide of the Turkish invasion he left thousands of people impaled in the wake of his retreat. Most of these were Turkish prisoners, but Vlad had no qualms whatsoever about impaling our Kin just as readily. And so, by allying ourselves with Vlad, we managed to compromise our principles, aid an invasion of our lands by the Turks, and ensure that our people suffered more than they ever would have under Vlad alone. We could hardly have failed more spectacularly if we'd read a manual on the subject.

But we are Shadow Lords, and we learn from our mistakes. Though Vlad escaped the siege of Poenari castle mounted by his brother, who had chosen to join with the Turks, he did not escape the grasp of the new monarch of Hungary, Matthias Corvinus. Corvinus threw Vlad in prison, where all the vampires in the world could not help him. You see, the monarch knew of Vlad's true nature, and was careful to bind him carefully so that the vampire could not cause any more trouble. We had some hand in that; we may be lacking in judgment at times, but by Gaia we do fix the messes we create.

Ultimately, Wallachia became a vassal state of the Ottomans. We didn't care for that much, but it was a damn sight better than dealing with the Impaler's madness. He came back for a brief stint in 1475, but he was a shadow of his former self. We eliminated him fairly easily at that point, and ended his madness forever... or so we'd hoped. This is where the tale gets a little strange. Centuries later, some hack writer named Stoker decided he was going to tell the tale of Dracula, and in the process turn the guy into the poster child for vampires. What's strange about it is the fact that he focused almost entirely on the guy's vampirism, leaving out his campaigns against the Turks altogether. So while we saw him as a hero/tyrant who stood against our mutual enemies, the world sees him as this tragic figure who's defined by his vampirism. It's rather absurd, but that's the human writer's perspective for you.

The Renaissance

The massive increase in trade among empires precipitated by the growth of knowledge in the West led to the Europeans' acquisition of three inventions heretofore known only in China: gunpowder, the compass, and movable type. Gunpowder allowed the Europeans and the Muslims alike to make firearms, which were responsible for much of the Ottoman Empire's successes (including the taking of Constantinople in 1453). The widespread use of firearms took war to a whole new level, and it made humanity that much more difficult to control. Movable type made widespread printing of books a possibility, and this led to Europeans becoming more and more educated (when they cared to, that is). It also broke the stranglehold Christianity had on Western Europe, placing the fates of its kingdoms in the hands of monarchs instead of priests. And the compass... well, that was the most influen-

tial invention of all, since it allowed for the easy navigation of seas even far away from land, which in turn led to the age of exploration. The world was about to become quite a bit larger, and the Garou were about to discover all new battlegrounds on which to fight the forces of the Wyrm.

On the upside, however, our homes in the Balkans stabilized to some extent under Ottoman rule. The people chafed under the leadership of the Turks, and there was near-constant internal strife, but from our viewpoint it worked out reasonably well. The Ottoman Empire was stable up through the 17th century or so, and things didn't really start to break down until about the early 19th century. That meant that even though we were an occupied state, we still had relative peace to console us — and that meant that the vampiric bastards who continued to try to take our lands and feed on our Kin were kept in check to an even greater extent than we were. For awhile there, before the technological advances of the Industrial Revolution made the very thought a fairy tale, we actually believed things might be okay. Silly us.

The Age of Exploration

As Classical knowledge and scholarship flooded back into Western Europe, the continent saw a flourishing of sorts, kicking technological development, the growth of the arts, and nation-building into high gear. While this era represents a remarkable period of growth and development for humanity, it also represents one of the Garou's greatest failures. This is when the genie was fully loosed from the bottle, and once it was there would be no going back. Any illusion of control we still maintained over humanity was crushed, and we completed our transition from lords of humanity to guerillas doing the best they could to fight off the ever-growing presence of the Wyrm in the world.

The New World

The discovery of new lands to the west of the Atlantic Ocean came as no surprise to us. Like all the Garou, we had long known of the existence of these lands. Many people did, as it happens. The Scandinavians had known of these lands for quite some time, and it doesn't take a genius to figure out that since the world was round (which was accepted as fact since the time of Classical Greece). It stood to reason that there might well be something besides water between Europe and Asia. For our part, a quick peek into the Umbra is all that was needed to tell us that moon bridges existed which went beyond European caerns. We just had no reason to

use those bridges, since our protectorates were right here in Europe. We assumed that the rest of Gaia's lands had their own protectors, and left them to their own devices.

Imagine our shock and dismay, then, when we learned our confidence was so horribly unjustified.

Eastern Europe didn't make much of an effort to get into the colonization business. Most of our lands are landlocked, after all, and exploring the world is something best left to nations with actual ships available to do the exploring. But our Spanish cousins were right in the thick of it, and while the Silver Fangs and the Fianna colonized North America it fell to us to accompany the Spaniards in their exploration of points farther south. What they discovered changed the Garou world forever.

As you learn more and more about the Garou, you will sooner or later come into contact with those who bemoan the loss of the "Pure Lands," or the Americas, to the avarice of the West. You will hear us labeled as Wyrmcomers, and you will see us painted as rapacious invaders who would not settle for anything other than the complete extermination of the peaceful natives who inhabited these lands. Before you get taken in with this line of rhetoric, let me tell you this: everything you'll hear is a load of horseshit. The "Pure Lands" weren't pure, not by a long shot. The details get muddy, but the gist of what I'm getting at is that most of the Mesoamerican tribes of humans had practices which were every bit as bad as anything Vlad the Impaler ever managed to dream up. The Toltecs, for example, practiced ritual cannibalism, and I've heard theories recently that an offshoot of their tribe made its way up to the lands of the Anasazi and turned them into some of the most twisted humans ever to grace Gaia's world with their presence. Another branch turned into the Aztecs, who engaged in wars just so they could gather captives for use in religious sacrifices. The Mayans were no better, and they actually believed that without a human sacrifice the sun would stop shining and the world would end. Even today, their altars and pyramids are so stained with blood that a sense of evil permeates the ruins of that civilization.

What's that? Well, yes, that's a good point. I *have* made it a point of order that we aren't terribly interested in protecting humanity, so I suppose that on the face of it there's no real reason we should have been horrified by what we saw. What you have to remember, however, is that it wasn't just the killing of others that horrified us. We see that all the time, and it's no big deal when all is said and done. No, what horrified us was the institutionalization of human sacrifice, and the use of religion to justify it. Vlad Dracula was an instrument of the Wyrm, even before his embrace by vampires. Our failure to handle that situation at all well made us paranoid about avoiding the same mistake in the future, so when we saw it here — the slaughter of human beings as a matter of religious orthodoxy, rather than just the whims of a tyrant — we could not tolerate it. The Spaniards felt the same way (although I imagine their sense of morality was also stirred by the copious amounts of gold that these empires "wrongly" possessed). There is a difference between war and butchery, and we could not stand by and allow this to happen.

Making things worse for the so-called pure tribes was the fact that these humans were not simply living in harmony with their environment. They were rather sophisticated in a technical sense, and they were actively transforming the environment around them to support their growing numbers and their own decadent desires. Yes, I know this seems a bit (more than a bit!) like the pot calling the kettle black, but the truth of the matter is that we just failed in our duties to Gaia in Europe, and we'd be damned if we failed Her again here. The Fera of the New World had failed to keep humanity in check, so it fell to us to do it for them. Few of us knew how far that would go, though, and to be honest I think it's quite possible that even fewer of us would have cared if we did.

The Second War of Rage

If an empire is corrupt, is the empire to blame, or are its leaders? When I look at regimes like the Nazis of Germany, or the Maoist regime of China, or Stalin's purges in the USSR, the answer is obvious to me. And that answer gives the lie to what I said just now. It was clear the religious hierarchy of the Mayans and their related tribes was thoroughly corrupt, and acting in accord with the will of the Wyrm. There were Fera who were affiliated with these humans; indeed, some of them even held ranks of power within the Mayan hierarchy. The stink of the Wyrm was everywhere, and it was so horrifying to us that we did the only thing we could think to do: we killed them all.

It was the wrong decision, of course. Had we thought things out a little more carefully, we would have realized that these rituals and customs couldn't have been practiced by all the people and shifters in Mexico. That was, in fact, perfectly obvious. But we didn't pay any attention to that disturbing

Why So Much Hatred?

It's worth taking a moment to consider why the Shadow Lords were so repulsed by what they found in the Americas. To do so, we need to look at the native shifters of this land, and understand why their activities might have fanned such incredible hatred in the Garou from across the sea.

First, consider the Balam. Under their watchful eye, humanity did a fair job of keeping itself in check via terrible wars of annihilation. From a human perspective this is pretty cold, but from a Gaian one it's Fera doing what is necessary to ensure that humans do not become a problem. It's likely that things got a bit out of control, and that the results went far beyond what the Balam intended, but that's neither here nor there. The point is that the Shadow Lords encountered a society ruled by priests, some of them Balam, who practiced blood sacrifices so that they could control their people via terror. Despite the cultural differences, these practices must have seemed to the Lords to be disturbingly similar to those of their old foes, the Tzimisce vampires. Given the whole mess with Dracula a mere century before, it is no surprise at all that the Lords reacted so violently to seeing the same sorts of things practiced by the Balam.

Also reinforcing the Tzimisce imagery were the Camazotz, strange bat-shifters that looked for all the world like the most powerful vampires did in their war forms. Of course it's true that the Camazotz were the most harmless of Gaia's children, but the Lords didn't see that — they saw humans who transformed into bats, just as the vampires did, and who consorted with other Fera who sacrificed human beings in bloody rituals. That will push even sane Garou over the edge, especially given where the Lords were coming from at the time.

Making matters even more tense was the presence of the Mokolé, a Fera breed totally absent from the Lords' oral history and culture. They might have heard legends of the crocodile-shifters now and then, but they were still extremely foreign creatures that transformed into reptiles. What really damned them in the Shadow Lords' eyes, however, was the fact that their hybrid forms were highly varied, and usually *huge*. The overall effect, then, was not unlike what the Lords remembered from an earlier, much more dangerous period in their history: fighting the Zmei, long before the Impergium ended.

These three things — Balam blood sacrifices, the bat affinity of the Camazotz, and the reptilian nature of the Mokolé — are what damned the native Fera of the Americas in the Shadow Lords' eyes. This does not by any means excuse the behavior of the Lords during this time (and isn't intended to), but it does offer insight into the misunderstanding that sparked their genocidal rage.

little fact. We saw enemies, and we remembered the Impaler, and we made a snap decision to make sure this sort of thing just couldn't happen ever again. An entire people paid for that decision with their lives.

The Second War of Rage had many casualties. The Balam were nearly completely destroyed, for it was they who were closest to the heart of the Mayan Empire. The few survivors retreated to their forests in South America, where they have been recovering ever since. The Ananasi, always unnerving to us, were killed on principle — they were so fond of bloodletting, so it was obvious to us that they couldn't be favored children of Gaia. The Mokolé, so silent and unforthcoming, were the very visage of the Wyrm. What clutches they had in Mexico were eliminated, but they didn't put up much fight. That stemmed the flow of our rage a bit, at least against them, but it would be awhile before we understood why they did that. The Nuwisha, the werecoyotes, didn't suffer much, but that's because they just up and left for the Umbra as soon as things went to hell. The native Garou, the Uktena, suffered for their secretive ways. We felt they had betrayed us by allowing the Mayans to rage unchecked, when in reality they were doing the best they could to fix the crises that did come up. They were just one tribe, after all, and the other Fera really weren't much help (and some, like the Balam, were part of the problem). That left the Camazotz...

The Camazotz. Of all the Fera in existence, the Camazotz were the ones who were closest to Gaia. They were Her voice, and when the war started they spoke to Her and asked Her what they should do. But what could She tell them? What could She say when Her children were set on fighting one another? There was nothing She could say, and so the Camazotz didn't know what to do. This is why they allowed the Mayan perversity to continue: the Balam were at the heart of it, and how could any of the Fera

change things without going to war against the Balam? Nobody wanted that, and yet when we came in and did just that – started a war – they knew there was nothing they could do to stop us. And so they did nothing. They did nothing, and they said nothing, and we killed them all, one by one.

When the last of the Camazotz died, something changed in us. The werebat's cry tore through us, roaring so loud as to make the greatest thunder a mere whisper. But it wasn't the death cry of a single werebeast, oh no. Instead it was the horrible cry of extinction, that hollow sound that accompanies the final breath of a species who will *never* see the world again. And with that sound all of us, every Shadow Lord in the world, fell to the ground as one, weeping in grief. It was too late, of course, but I think we finally recognized the enormity of what we had done. Gaia was never quite the same after that. It was quite a while before She forgave us, and even now there's a sorrow in the Umbra that will probably never go away. Recently, though, we've taken steps to help redress the issue. That's a more recent topic, though, and there's a lot to talk about between now and then, so bear with me.

The Storm Eater

No one knows where the Storm Eater came from. Well, that's what most Garou will tell you, anyway. We know exactly where it came from: it was loosed upon the world by the death cry of the last Camazotz, and it is our punishment for embarking on another War of Rage. We should have known better — the horror of the act the first time around should have been enough. But we were stupid, and the Get of Fenris and the Silver Fangs and the Glass Walkers were stupid in parts farther north. They didn't see the things we saw in Mexico, but they were happy enough to join in on the fun. They're Garou, after all; they're stupid like that.

We're not sure exactly how the death of the Camazotz and the Storm Eater are related, but the prevailing theory is that the death cry shook the Umbral world a bit, and caused Gaia to convulse. Many of the wards laid down by the Croatan, and maintained by the Uktena, were loosened that day. Most were patched up easily enough; the Uktena are good at that, which is why we don't bother them much. But the Storm Eater was just too powerful to deal with, and it got loose. In the process, it put the "wild" in the moniker "Wild West."

The Storm Eater ravaged the Umbra for decades, making life difficult for Garou and Wyrm alike until the Two Moons pack (led by a Silver Fang, no less; who would have thought it?) finally discovered a way to defeat it. As it turns out, the method they discovered required a great sacrifice from each of the extant tribes of Garou — thirteen of our greatest warriors would have to sacrifice themselves to bind the great Bane forever. Most of the European tribes scoffed at the idea, but to everyone's surprise (including, I think, our own) one of these heroes just gnashed his teeth and told the rest to get on with it. That hero was Darkness Rising, Shadow Lord, descendant of Dark-Claw-of-Vengeance — the executioner of the last of the Camazotz. No one knew why he accepted the Uktena's solution so easily, but his voice swayed the Europeans' minds and they all eventually agreed to do what needed to be done. But it's no surprise to us, really. As I've said, we Shadow Lords aren't perfect by any means. But by Gaia, we do clean up our messes, no question.

Russian Patronage

Hostilities in the Balkans

As the Ottoman Empire began to fall apart, the various regions in the Balkans began to take shape as independent nation states. Ottoman influence had kept the region relatively stable for several hundred years, but the constant undercurrent of unrest and aggression kept tensions high until conflicts between Russia and the Ottomans began to radically reshape European politics. Unfortunately, our territories became pawns in that game, and we found ourselves shuffled from one patron to another, occupied first by the Turks, then by the Russians, then by the Austrians, and round and round again. There was Garou influence here as well, make no mistake. The Crimean war in the mid-1850s was mirrored by a conflict between houses Austere Howl and Crescent Moon of the Silver Fangs, prominent in Britain and Russia respectively, and they made a mess of Garou politics just as surely as the kings of those nations made a mess of human politics.

House Crescent Moon overextended its reach, and made to "liberate" our lands from the corrupting influence of the Wyrm. On paper they were quite successful; they liberated the Sept of the Night Sky, which had been overrun by the Tzimisce vampires in the 15th century, and they did a fine job of stirring things up among the various vampire sects in the region. However, they also destroyed the tenuous status quo we'd managed to arrange, and as a result we weren't able to keep the blood-

suckers from locking things down once the Russian forces finally made peace with the Brits and Austrians and pulled out. In the end, our lands became a bona fide nation state, for all the good it did us; because of the Fangs' meddling, the vampires were in control, other Garou occupied our home territories, and we and our Kin were pretty thoroughly trod upon.

The Great War

As the Silver Fangs put more and more effort into micromanaging our affairs, the various aggressive overtures from the remnants of the Ottoman Empire and the kingdom of Hungary kept the Balkan nations in a state of near constant war. Ethnic conflicts became more and more intense, and before long practically every nation in Europe was spoiling for a fight. When Archduke Ferdinand of Austria was assassinated, they got it. The Great War dragged every country on the continent into it, as well as several others such as the United States and the various other colonies or former colonies of the European powers. As for us, we were the stomping grounds once again as we proved to be a conduit by which Austria could attack Russia. We had no love for the Fangs at the time, but we didn't want to drop the war on their doorstep, either. No matter our desires, though, that's the way it worked out.

The Great War was the bloodiest and most unpleasant war we'd seen for centuries, and it put everyone out of the mood for fighting for a good long time. Unfortunately, the victors of the conflict made it their mission in life to carve the losers into tiny pieces, and that led to the resentment and general bad feelings which would resurrect the conflict two decades later.

Revolution

With the war more or less over, the Silver Fangs in Russia found themselves forced to deal with a new threat: the Bolshevik uprising, backed by the Bone Gnawers, effectively toppled the power of the Russian Tsars, and created enough chaos that tyrants could step in and take control of the country. As it turns out, the uprising was also used to mask a shadow war between different vampire sects, with one wealthy elite falling prey to a disenfranchised underclass — a relationship which apparently mirrored that of the Bone Gnawers and the Silver Fangs. As far as we can tell, the Bone Gnawers were ignorant of the larger pattern of events they helped set in motion; that does not mean, however, that the Russian Garou forgave them for their transgressions. The Bone Gnawers quickly lost control of the situation, and the vampires who used them fell prey to their own internal struggles. Several assassinations later, a vampire elite was in control. When all was said and done Communism held sway in the country, and the monster Stalin ruled with an iron fist. He had the firm support of a number of influential vampire clans, and that pretty much sealed the country's fate for the next 70 years.

There were two septs of Lords in the country at the time, and a handful of individual Lords scattered around the country. They were avaricious folk, and made no secret of their desire to take the power of the Garou from the Fangs and use it to forge the Garou into a weapon that might free Russia from the new menace that plagued it. As is typically the case, however, nobody trusted the Lords enough to see the wisdom of their position, and as a result the tribes dithered until the vampiric elements of Russia's leadership fell apart of its own accord. That didn't happen until just this last decade, so you can see the importance of learning to manipulate the other tribes and forcing them to work in tandem, even if they don't know they're doing so.

World War II

With all the indignities heaped upon Germany at the end of the Great War, I suppose it's no surprise that the period following the close of that conflict and the beginning of WWII in the late 1930s were more of a respite and a period for building various national war machines than anything else. It was obvious to most everyone that a new war was all but inevitable, and that it would just be a continuation of the last one. Unfortunately, humans became a *lot* more adept at killing one another in the short 20 years between wars, and that ensured that we would be left with plenty of fallout when all the killing was done.

As the war hit its height, we found ourselves ready to admit defeat. Hitler and his allies controlled most of Europe, and if they managed to prevail there'd be no real way we could stop them. Humanity's control over the world would be so absolute that there'd be no place left in it for Garou, and that meant we all might as well go the way of the Nuwisha and just hop into the Umbra and be done with it all. But fortunately, Hitler proved once again why it's a very bad idea to let a diplomat run a war, and he managed to botch a perfectly good strategy. He invaded the Soviet Union in the middle of winter, which no one save the Mongols has ever

managed to do successfully (and them because the chill of Siberia made the Russian winters seem tame). That was mistake number one. He also pulled his troops back from the Normandy coast, leaving that area poorly enough defended that Allied troops could get a foothold and undo much of the damage he'd done. When the German Get crushed their traitorous brethren (who'd joined the Nazi armies in a misguided attempt to grind humanity under their heels), the German war machine just wasn't long for the world.

This left Eastern Europe in a pretty neat state from a Garou perspective. Much of it was razed to the ground, and there was little chance of the West recovering well enough to actually regain its former glory. That was good, since it meant we'd have a chance at regaining control in the region, albeit not without some darn good politics on our part. On the flip side, however, we also saw the emergence of two superpowers the likes of which the world had never seen, and the birth of a terrible weapon with the potential to destroy the entire world. Ironically, that weapon was made by men and women who were for the most part quite peaceful, and who feared a world of tyranny far more than they did a weapon capable of destroying the Earth.

The United States Ascendant

It's hard to explain our role in the United States before World War II. The simple truth of the matter is that we didn't consider it a particularly important place. It was, for the most part, just another colony as far as we were concerned, and we were trying to focus our attention on the part of the world that dictated policy for all the rest — Europe, and to some extent Asia. The U.S. was just this upstart country a world away, and hence beneath our concern.

This is not to say, however, that we knew nothing about what was going on — far from it. Our Kin had settled in and around Mexico when the Spaniards came, and some wound up in Texas when it joined the States. They were close enough to events in New Mexico to know what was going on with the bomb, and when that bomb went off in Japan we knew we had to pay a lot more attention to what was going on in the USA. Fortunately, we'd been paying attention to the ways the wars around us were waged over the past several decades, and we knew something about how the post-war politics worked. That allowed us to plant some seeds in the post-war governments, and to influence policy once we had.

The Cold War

The post-war era in the United States was marked by the rise of big government, big science, and incredible bureaucratization. The democratic world has always been characterized by the fact that it's ripe for exploitation by those with staunch political mindsets, but in the post-war era this tendency was magnified a hundredfold. Agencies were created for virtually every function imaginable, and the extent to which we could capitalize on this and turn it to our advantage was just mind-boggling. This marked a turning point of sorts for the Shadow Lords. While we have always been intensely political animals, the Cold War era United States marked the first time we could afford to be alphas purely in the political sense, abandoning the ways of the wolf and embedding ourselves in an entirely human culture. Many of the elders in our tribal homelands frowned on this, but it was, at least at the time, the wave of the future, and there was no stopping it.

Fortunately, this worked out reasonably well. A fair number of Lords decided that it would be a fine idea to become intelligence operatives working for the United States and other Western nations, and Lords within the USSR took up similar positions. It wasn't for everyone, certainly not for those with a goodly share of Rage, but it was a lot more convenient than trying to maintain a desk job somewhere important. Thus it was that some of the most influential agents, and those with the most critical tasks, wound up working for the Shadow Lords, and the Garou Nation as a whole. Thus, we managed to orchestrate elaborate schemes that ultimately kept tensions between the two superpowers from overflowing. While the other tribes continued to bicker and cast blame hither and yon, we were hard at work ensuring that there would be a future to fight about. Pity they were never terribly appreciative of that fact.

Soviet Occupation

With the failure of the Silver Fangs to hold power in Russia, and the subsequent chaos of World War II, there was no real way to oppose the Soviet annexation of much of Eastern Europe. The western nations, particularly the United States, tried to push for democratic governments in the east, but Soviet occupation made that an impossibility. The U.S. just didn't have the bargaining position it needed to make free governments a reality, so our fate was ultimately swept aside in favor of larger issues. In other words, it was business as usual as far as our homelands were concerned.

The fact that vampires now controlled Russia, and by extension the Soviet Union as a whole, made our position quite precarious. The fact that Stalin was purging the country of undesirables and making a huge push for the industrialization of the Union didn't help matters any. With our Kin being gutted, our homelands occupied by Soviet troops, and our lives in danger as never before, this was quite possibly the darkest period in our history. The scale of things was just so immense that we didn't know how we could even begin to deal with it, and so we went into hiding and sought to consolidate our power in hopes that we'd be able to act more openly later on.

Stalin's purges ended with his death, and for the most part so did the real horrors of Soviet occupation. The environmental disasters were still a huge problem, and the vampires yet retained control of the Union, but things stabilized for our Kin and we knew where things stood, more or less. Some Garou managed to infiltrate the government, and as I said we did a fair job of weaving our way into the intelligence community. It wasn't an ideal situation, but it was one we could adapt to and turn to our advantage.

Independence

Soviet occupation may have been harsh, but the stability it brought us allowed us to tend to some business that needed to be addressed: we had to retake the Sept of the Night Sky from the Silver Fangs. They'd occupied it since they liberated it from the Tzimisce during the Crimean War, and we'd been so off-balance since that the only thing we could do was bide our time and wait for an opportunity to take back what was ours. That time came when Stalin died. With the immediate horror of the Soviet Union abated for the moment, a Russian Lord named Boris Thunderstrike decided to visit the ancestral home of his tribe. While there, he ingratiated himself with Heart of Fury, the local sept leader. After some skillful politicking and a fair bit of patience, Thunderstrike was able to force the Silver Fang leader to abdicate his rule, leaving the sept in control of the Shadow Lords once again. Freedom from the Soviets wouldn't come for another half century, but that was just fine with us. We learned to work around their occupation, and to turn it to our advantage. We reap the rewards of that hard work even now.

The Curtain Falls

Many people don't fully understand just how much we lost when the iron curtain fell. It's true that the vampires who ruled the Soviet Union at the time were some of the most active agents of the Wyrm that the world has ever seen, and it's true that their machinations created environmental disasters unmatched before or since. But as far as our Kin were concerned, things were relatively stable. It was the sort of uneasy peace you have when you know you aren't safe, but at the same time you know what to expect. You know there will be food available, even if it isn't very high quality or terribly abundant. You know the military will put a stop to uprisings and demonstrations, so you avoid those areas and you're mostly okay. You know the military is in charge, so you don't mess with them. You learn how the system works, and how to survive in it, and you get by as best you can.

None of us *wanted* to be ruled by the Soviets. We aren't fools, and we knew full well how that kind of police state worked. But at the same time, we took a certain comfort in knowing that everyone had to scrape by, same as we did. We took pleasure in the presence of our Kin, because the hardships we faced created a sense of community we hadn't really felt in years past. Communism itself was a joke (at least in practice), but it did manage to forge our Kin into fairly tight-knit groups. Most importantly, however, was the fact that soviet occupation kept the vampires in our protectorates on a tight leash. We knew the vampires that ruled Russia were of a different sect than those in our homelands, so the control the Soviets brought was welcome in that respect as well.

So it was that when the Union broke up in the late 1980s we weren't exactly jubilant. The Soviets, for all their failings, brought order to our lives. Our protectorates were as stable and peaceful as they'd ever been under Soviet rule, and we looked on the loss of that stability with fear and trepidation. We saw what was coming, even if our human associates saw only freedom from the yoke of Soviet oppression.

The Modern Era

Baba Yaga, and the War for Russia

In retrospect, it's really not terribly surprising: once the iron curtain went down, the Shadow Curtain went up to replace it, and that's when things *really* started going to hell. We thought Stalin's purges were bad, and they were, but having vampires and demons moving around openly in the country, draining our caerns and slaughtering people in the chaos that follows any breakup, was an order of magnitude worse. Stalin's purges and Soviet oppression were directed against many politically undesirable groups, including our Kin, but we could handle that. His industrialization was disastrous (and the lack of any sort of sane control of that growth even worse), but it was ultimately about helping turn the Soviet Union into a power capable of competing with the United States in a military and industrial capacity. It was unpleasant, but at least we could understand it and adapt to it. But this... the forces unleashed behind cover of the shadow curtain were more horrible than anything the world has ever seen. Great supernatural beasts were given free reign to do as they willed, and Baba Yaga now targeted us specifically for elimination. The Sept of the Night Sky in Wallachia was spared the worst of her attentions, but the Thunderstrike Sept and Sept of the Brooding Sky were not so lucky. Forced to watch the Silver Fangs fall to pieces (and take the rest of the Garou with them), the Lords there were bitter and petulant individuals. And as such, they did little to help the Russian Garou in their plight until the other tribes had already organized a counterattack against the hag's forces. I don't defend their actions, but... well, the Silver Fangs had paraded their dominance in front of the Russian Lords for centuries, so it's not terribly surprising that those same Lords couldn't care less about the Fangs' plight.

Whatever it was that ended Baba Yaga's rule, and we suspect vampiric conflict, the death of the Hag was shrouded in secrecy. We know there was another sect of vampires involved, and that they terrified all of those we knew about to date. Their activities involved mysterious forces we don't pretend to understand, and most of us would be just as happy if we never find our exactly what happened on the day she died. But with her death, Russia was free — and Heaven help us, because that's when things started to get hard.

Fallout

People don't understand how difficult things have become in the wake of the Soviet Union's breakup. Once we were poor, but there were certain things we could rely on. Now, we supposedly have the opportunity to do whatever we want to do, but we have no certainties whatsoever. And now, with no strong government to keep things humming

along in a fairly orderly fashion, there's nothing to stop any crimelord or petty despot who cares to from taking over a region and terrorizing the people therein every bit as effectively as the Soviets did. We have traded security for freedom, and lost both in the process.

With the fall of Soviet rule, we are vulnerable once more to some of our greatest vampiric enemies. Fearing the wrath of the Turks up through the 19th century and the various powers that controlled Wallachia and its neighboring regions in the years thereafter, the greatest of the fiends have kept their distance up until now. With the Soviet takeover, they didn't dare return for fear of running afoul of the vampire sects firmly in control of Russia and her possessions. But now, with the empires crumbled and the Soviets' influence non-existent, there is nothing to stop them from returning to their ancient ways and taking revenge upon us for past slights. The Impaler is no more, but others of his ilk, including the dread count Vladimir Rustovitch, are looking on the area with hungry eyes. We have endured the Soviets, the bitch-queen Baba Yaga, and our own internal civil wars, but in the end the final conflict will come down to one between us and our ancient vampiric foes. That battle may prove to be more than even we can bear.

Yugoslavia

It is continually amazing to me that the worst foes we ever have to fight are not Wyrmspawn, but rather human beings themselves. I have spoken at length about vampires, internal strife, and malevolent Wyrm spirits, but none of them could even begin to compare to the horrors that were unleashed once Yugoslavia broke up and the various ethnic groups therein started going to war with one another. As it turns out, the bulk of that hatred was due to one man, known to the world as Marshall Tito. He proved to be quite an able leader during the Second World War, and we supported him in his efforts to keep Yugoslavia free from Axis control. The problem lay in the fact that he led these people not by inspiring them, but rather by playing them off against one another to enhance his own status, and thence solidify his control over them. We have to respect him for that, since that's a very Shadow Lord sort of thing to do, but the man had no foresight, so his country only managed to hold together until he died. His son tried to maintain the peace, but unfortunately he just didn't have the charisma to pull it off. Civil war was the inevitable result.

The Wyrm had a fine, fine day when the war broke out. The war crimes committed during that time were on par with any in human history, and ranged from the murder of innocents (and non-combatants) to torture to rape, with everything in-between. The power of hate can produce some truly spectacular results, and in this case it resulted in a feast for Banes, a dramatic increase in the power of Urge Wyrms, and a veritable feeding frenzy for the resident vampires in the region. A number of Garou tribes responded to the carnage, binding the most troublesome of the Banes and slaughtering the Wyrmspawn out of hand. Among the tribes that participated here were the Black Furies, the Red Talons, and a scattering of members of other tribes such as the Children of Gaia, the Silent Striders, the Glass Walkers, and the Bone Gnawers. We had some serious questions for these last two, as we wanted to know how they could have let things get so out of hand. The cities are their turf, after all, and after all the trouble in Russia you'd have thought they'd have learned their lessons by now. Nowadays, if it doesn't involve a computer or a cellular phone the Glass Walkers don't want anything to do with it, and the Bone Gnawers are so busy covering their own tails and sifting through garbage that they don't know what's going on until they're in the thick of it. It's said that people never learn, but I suppose that applies to Garou as well.

Anyway, the big pushes made by Garou forces in the regions that broke apart from Yugoslavia were made by the Black Furies, to the south, and the Lords to the north. Several of our packs ran into one another, and after a few tense moments they just shrugged and went on about our business. Shortly thereafter Margrave Konietzko met up with a number of highly influential Furies, and we've been getting on well ever since. The Margrave had the foresight to treat the Furies in exactly the same fashion as he would any other Garou, and his graciousness has borne fruit — no other tribe has such as good working relationship with the Furies these days as we do, and this is the power of our philosophy in action.

The Amazon

As things settled down after a couple of world wars and humans got on with the business of rebuilding, they began to think about all of the things they were losing when they focused so intently on fighting one another and getting the upper hand in statecraft. Specifically, they began to think a bit about the non-human world around them, and how they thought they might want to interact with it. What they found, of course, surprised them — they discovered that the natural world was a genuinely remarkable place, and that they ought to do what they could to protect it. Far too little, far too late, sure, but they finally got involved, and that's what counts. The question now was, what were we gonna do about it?

Some places seemed almost beyond help. Once the Black Spiral Dancers were forced out of Chernobyl, we had to figure out how to clean the place up and make it habitable again. Still working on that one. But at the same time, we had to deal with several decades of industrial waste on a truly massive scale, and by about the 1970s or so we started figuring out how to do that. We gave the humans some direction, and soon they were doing stuff like cleaning up the Black Sea (you do *not* want to know how polluted that place was), designating areas throughout Europe and North America as national parks, and labeling others in the undeveloped world as World Heritage Sites. These were just labels, but they carried with them a certain amount of power that made humanity sit up and take notice. This, of course, brings us to the Amazon.

When we were busy killing all the native Fera in the Second War of Rage, we managed to miss the fact that one of the greatest monuments to Gaia's power was sitting right in the middle of their territory. In the 1970s, though, things had settled down enough at home that we could turn our eyes to it and see what we could do to protect it. Unfortunately, Pentex had seen it long before us, and was doing everything in its power to either corrupt or destroy the place. When Garou started showing up to do something about this, we ran into trouble on three fronts: first, we didn't know who was going to coordinate our efforts down there. There weren't many Lords who could be spared to help organize our contributions there, and most of the other tribes were in a similar position. The second issue we faced was the fact that, aside from Pentex, the native humans in the region were also destroying the forest. They weren't doing it out of malice, though; they were doing it because they were so poor that they didn't have much in the way of other options. Slash and burn agriculture doesn't get you much, but when your choice is that or starve you take what you can get. The third obstacle we faced was, of course, the native Fera. They remembered the War of Rage, better than we might have liked, and they hadn't forgiven us for it. Can't blame them, but that

didn't change the fact that their opposition was rather inconvenient.

Well, each of these issues has been addressed, to a greater or lesser extent. The leadership issue was resolved when Golgol Fangs-First showed up, whipped every last Garou who felt like challenging him, and formed our people into a formidable fighting force. He didn't get *any* opposition from the Lords in residence, mostly because he was so set on getting things done that they had nothing to complain about. They were so happy to see real leadership for a change that they happily played the role of loyal beta, watching for the inevitable plots which would challenge Golgol's rule and playing their role in the Garou war machine.

Now, the unfortunate part about all of this is the fact that Golgol didn't see any need whatsoever for the other Fera. As far as he was concerned, the Garou were the warriors of Gaia, and they weren't. Simple. So until Pentex is gone, the warriors fight, and the others get out of the way. What that means for us is that we basically cleared the way; if the Fera interfered, we found ways to remove them from the picture so that they'd stop interfering. If that invited reprisals, so be it – we'd find a fall guy to take the blame and let the Fera chew on him a bit while we got on with our business. This was a messy way of doing things, but we weren't about to stand in Golgol's way when he was making such wonderful progress. Let the Fera complain all they liked — as long as Gaia was protected, that was all that counted as far as we were concerned.

Well, after some years of this back and forth business Golgol decided he had to do something to make peace with the natives. Gaia would hardly be best served by just eliminating them all, and we had to agree with that notion — some of us remembered the loss of the Camazotz, and none of us wanted to see that happen again. So, Golgol made nice with them, more or less, and now we've all become one great happy family.

Well, perhaps not.

We get on better with the surviving Fera than we have in the past, but they still don't care for us much. They do, however, listen to us, and that makes them outstanding tools. This isn't true so much with the Mokolé, but it's very true with the Balam. Got a rival? Use a Balam to eliminate him and blame it on Pentex. Know something about Pentex? Turn a Balam onto it and save the lives of a few Garou. Got a problem with a Balam? Find out what *other* Balam hate him, and spark a turf war between them. We couldn't have asked for a better setup, and as a result Pentex is going down. Now's the time to get involved, since the opportunities are great to cut down rivals on all sides and make a name for yourself.

Appeasing Bat

As the Amazon war rages to the south, a different sort of war was raging to the north. In northern Mexico, the Shadow Lords of the Sept of the Earth Mother found themselves locked in combat with the vampires, who were doing their level best to turn Mexico into a feeding ground. It's basically Middle-Ages Wallachia all over again, and what few Lords live there are pretty upset about it. So you can imagine their surprise and irritation when one of their most promising up and coming Theurges winds up channeling the life of none other than Dark-Claw-of-Vengeance, the Shadow Lord responsible for the extinction of the Camazotz. The Theurge, a homid named Miguel Gutierrez, took the revelations he received quite seriously, and he began looking for ways to put his penitent ancestor to rest for good. What he got, though, was enough to shock the Garou Nation as a whole, and catapult his pack into the international spotlight.

Dark-Claw-of-Vengeance drove his descendant on a mad quest around Mexico, learning the secrets of the Camazotz and of Bat so that he might ultimately do... something. No one was quite sure what he wanted, but people just didn't channel past lives this strongly unless Gaia had something specific in mind for them, so everyone just went along with it as best they could. The quest took a turn for the insane, however, when it led the pack to the heart of Malfeas, a suicide quest if ever there was one. The old spirit led the pack throughout the labyrinth of the plane, until they finally came upon Bat in all his insane glory. By rights, that should have been the end of things — tussling with a Wyrm-corrupted Incarna is just not a winning proposition. But Dark-Claw-of-Vengeance managed to get through to Bat somehow, or at least a portion of Bat, and the Incarna sent them packing without killing them.

Weeks later, Gutierrez discovered he could communicate with that small part of Bat that hadn't given in completely to hate, and his pack took the Incarna as their totem. Their sept was convinced the pack had fallen to the Wyrm, but none of the pack members appeared to be carrying even the slightest trace of Wyrm taint on their person. Even the Judges of Doom couldn't find any reason to destroy them, and in fact found them to be some of the more honorable Lords in recent memory.

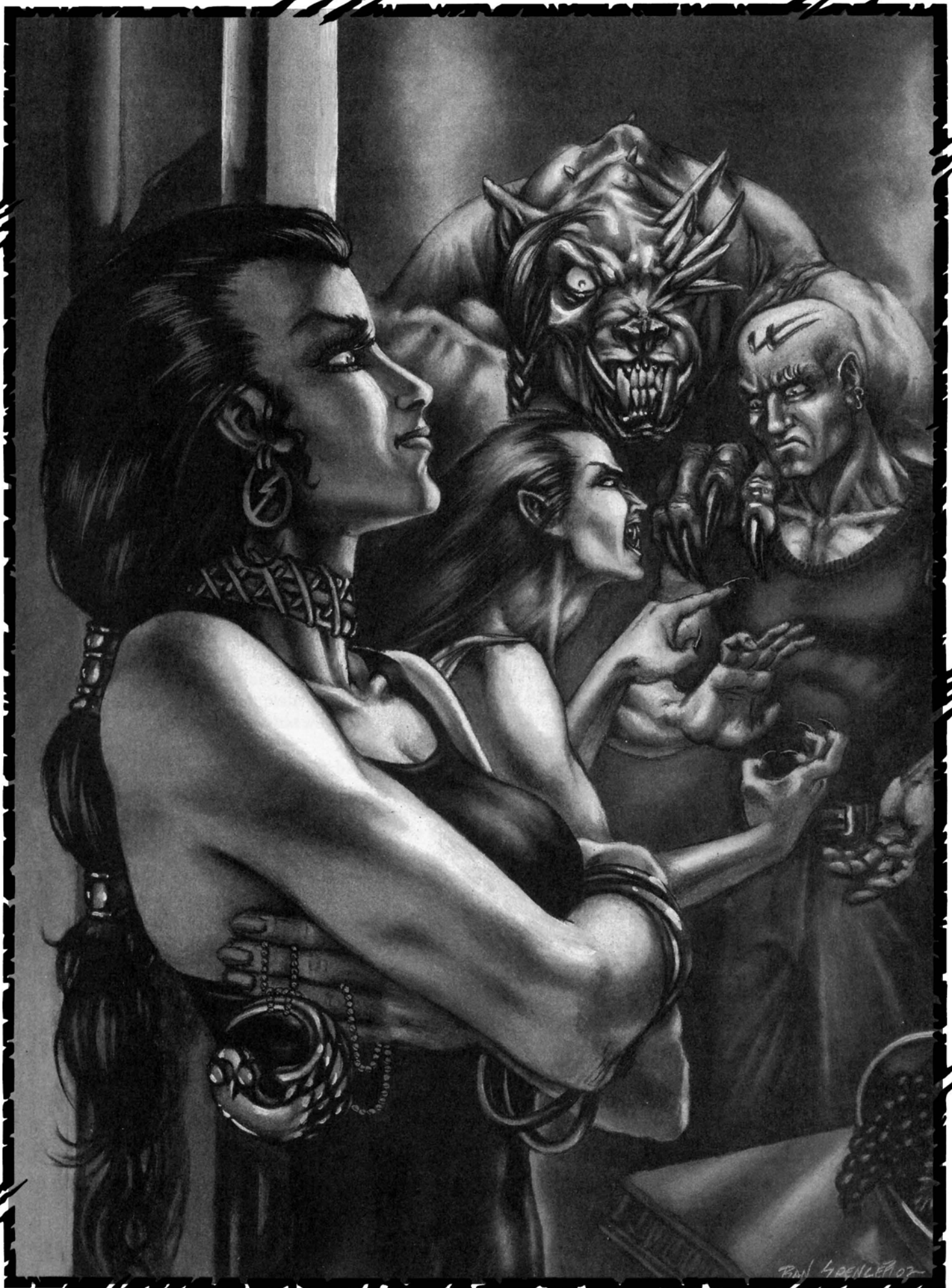
As you might expect, this incident has generated tremendous controversy within our tribe. Taking a Wyrm totem as your own violates every rule of common sense, and yet the power exhibited by the pack shows that they are very much Gaian Garou. And if their lack of taint were not compelling enough on its own, the fact that the tribe uses its unique gifts to tear through the Sabbat in Mexico and aid the Get of Fenris to the north in Texas is compelling evidence in and of itself. The Sept of the Earth Mother harbors no minions of the Wyrm, and yet the members of this pack are doing what cannot be done. How they are doing this, and what this means for Bat and the Wyrm, remains to be seen.

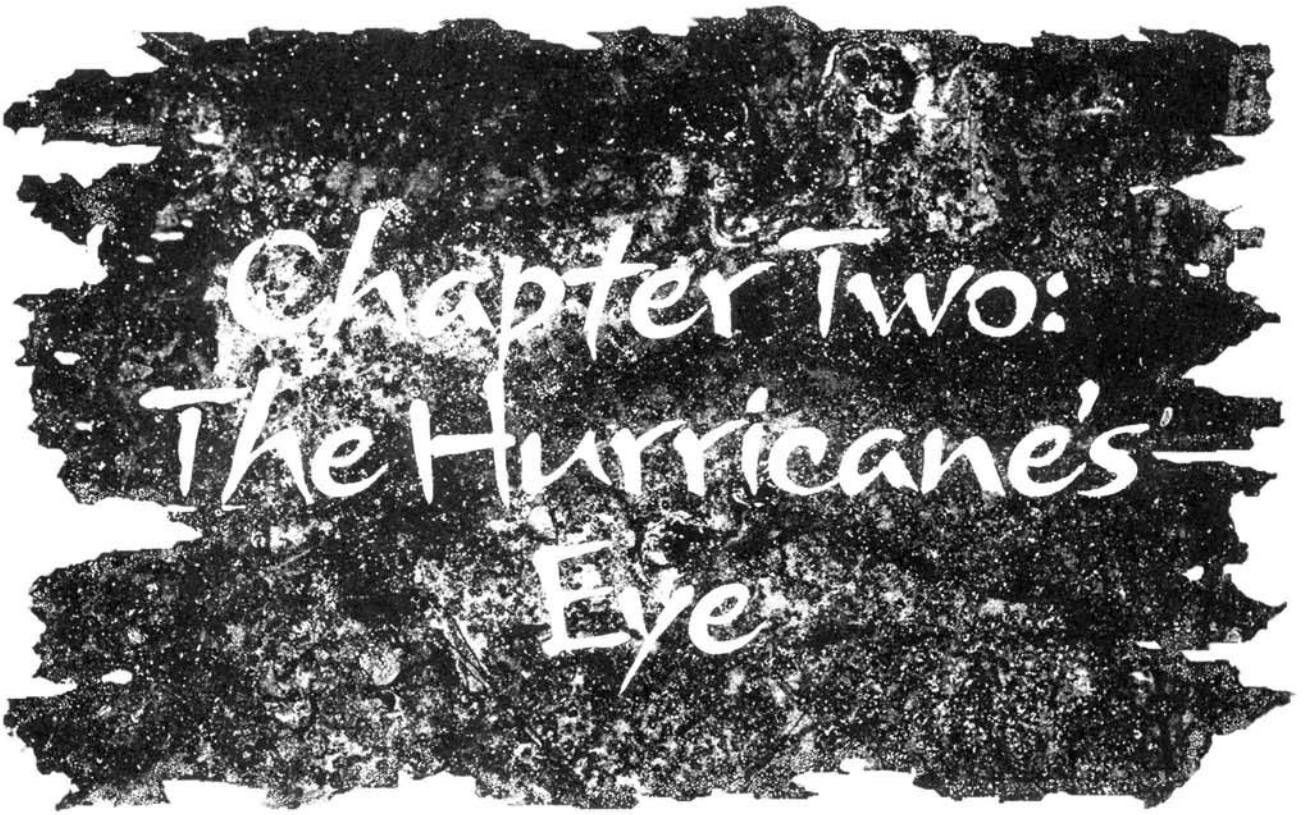
The Margrave on the Move

Meanwhile, back in Europe, a German Shadow Lord of great power has taken control of the Sept of the Night Sky. The name of this Garou is Yuri Konietzko, and his will is such that no Garou on the continent can resist his edicts. From an old family of the German nobility, Konietzko came to Wallachia after the fall of the Soviet Union back in 1991. He saw, as the Lords in Wallachia saw, that the loss of the stabilizing influence of the Soviets would lead to chaos, both because of the ethnic strife which was sure to follow and because of the vampiric influences which would come back to haunt the land. His predictions proved to be correct, and over the course of the next ten years he led the sept in battle after battle against the expansionist-minded bloodsuckers that invaded our land like it was open season. Some of them have proven impossible to fell, but we have made it clear to them that we won't give an inch so long as the Margrave is in charge.

It isn't just our sept that's making progress in this fashion, either. Anatoly Masaryk, the successor to the seat of leadership in the Thunderstrike sept in Russia, was put in place largely thanks to the Margrave's efforts. It seems that old Alexander Volkov had outlived his usefulness, and Konietzko decided to put a more liberal and open-minded Lord in charge of the sept in Father Night's stead. The support the Shadow Lords gave to the Russian Garou proved decisive in ending the war against Baba Yaga, and as a result they have a position of respect (if not trust) among the Russian werewolves. And since the Margrave has Masaryk in his back pocket, that means he has clout in Russia at large as well.

The Margrave's guiding philosophy seems to be relatively straightforward: dominate the packs you must, treat those who are capable as equals, and bow before no one. The Silver Fangs hate him, but they can go hang. He's accomplished more in the battle against the Wyrm in ten years than they have in the last hundred, and when all is said and done that's what counts.





I have seen tempests when the scolding winds
Have riv'd the knotty oaks, and I have seen
Th' ambitious ocean swell, and rage, and foam,
To be exalted with the threat'ning clouds;
But never till to-night, never till now,
Did I go through a tempest dropping fire.
Either there is a civil strife in heaven,
Or else the world, too saucy with the gods,
Incenses them to send destruction.

— William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, Act I, Scene iii

Spirituality

Mara glared at the cub before her with a mixture of irritation and disdain. She never cared much for cubs to begin with, and the prospect of educating one was doubly annoying. Still, she supposed it had to be done; the only way the younglings could become something more than mewling babies was to show them the spirit ways of the Lords, and Mara was better equipped to do that than most anyone else. That didn't mean she had to like it, however.

How is it that I got lucky enough to baby-sit a whelp like you? Never mind, that was a rhetorical question. So, it falls to me to tell you what is expected of you as a Shadow Lord, eh? Very well, then. Listen carefully, because I'm not fond of repeating myself. You already know where we came from, yes? Good. This is where you learn where we are, and what we mean to do with the world before us. It is not ours, not all of it at any rate. But by Gaia, we will shape it as though it were. Here is how we do it.

Gaia

Gaia, of course, is everyone and everything around us. She is pliable, yet enduring. She is strong, yet vulnerable. She is eternal, yet ephemeral. She is the concrete world before us, and the abstract realm just beyond us. She is, in a word, complex. It is utter foolishness to think one can understand Gaia. She is not a thing we may simply seek out and address directly; She is too far beyond us for that. As such, while we have many ways of thinking about Her, these are simply models we use to make Her easier for our

feeble minds to comprehend. In the end, the truth of things is unimportant. We see what we want to see, in this matter as in all others. So, when I tell you what Gaia is, I am not telling you the truth. I am simply telling you how we choose to look at things.

We see around us three main aspects to the whole of reality that is Gaia. We see the substance of the world, which is hard and earthy, living matter like you and me, or the stuff of spirit. This is the first of Gaia's aspects, the Wyld. The Wyld is limitless possibility, but it needs direction to take on form and substance. It is Gaia's second facet, the Weaver, which gives the Wyld form. And of course, the things created by the Weaver must eventually be broken down, so new things might be formed from the refuse of the old, and thus keep the system self-sustaining. This third force is the Wyrm, and for reasons described below it is now the enemy against which we fight.

The Wyld

The Wyld is the essence of reality. It represents the limitless potential of Gaia's existence, but it is meaningless without a mind, a will, to shape it. It is the aspect of the Triat that we Garou can most easily feel within us, since it is primal and unbound. But at the same time, it is the only member of the Triat that cannot be said to have a mind. It is as it has always been, and even the insanity of the Weaver and the corruption of the Wyrm cannot change that. The changes wrought by the Wyld's brethren are ultimately transitory, and that is what gives us the strength to continue our fight. The world as it is not the world as it must be, and we know full well that we can be the instruments of its reshaping.

We are not the guardians of the Wyld — not the Lords. As Garou, we must protect it, yes, so that the Weaver and Wyrm cannot unbalance the universe by destroying their sibling utterly. But there are the Furies and the Talons to bother with the spirituality of the Wyld, and we are happy to leave them to it. Our tasks lie elsewhere.

The Weaver

Where the Wyld is possibility, the Weaver is the force that gives it substance. Human thought and rationality, and the society they have created, is a product of the Weaver's influence. Many Garou claim the Weaver is the one ultimately responsible for the sorry state of the world we live in, and that may indeed be so. Her awakening, her burgeoning awareness, seems to have driven her to insanity, and the frenzy of construction that is the modern world is the result. But the part of us that is driven by the Weaver has its positive side as well. It is our will that lets us control our rage, and is that same will that lets us force the world around us to conform to our desires. That is the Weaver's gift to us, and it gives us comfort even as it traps us in a cage of our own making.

The Weaver is not our business, either, at least not as a tribe. We fight against her insanity as we must, and we refuse to either rely on or utterly avoid her trappings — but the Glass Walkers and the Stargazers have their hands full trying to unravel her webs, and it is not our place to instruct them. We do what we must to oppose her excesses, and we use her tools when it is necessary, but her lore is not ours.

The Wyrm

The Wyrm began as a force of balance, a way for Gaia to sustain and rejuvenate Herself. A part of that original incarnation of the Wyrm persists in us, in the form of our Rage. Now, however, we know this being better as a force of corruption and decay, particularly in the form of the vampires that plague our homeland. Trapped in the Weaver's web, the Wyrm was driven insane by its confinement. Now, the Wyrm corrupts what it can no longer destroy openly. It works to similar effect within our hearts and minds, pushing us toward stagnation and self-destruction instead of confronting us in forms that can easily be combated. This is why we must act decisively in our effort to preserve Gaia — only then will we evade the Wyrm's attempts to lay claim to our souls.

The Wyrm is our business. It is the business of all Garou, but our Theurges have delved deep into understanding its ways, just as the Uktena have. We do not offer ourselves to it, of course, and neither do we accept its acrid taint as a tolerable quality. The Wyrm is the key to strengthening the Wyld and pruning back the Weaver — if its Corrupter aspect can be sliced away from it, leaving the Balance Wyrm behind, then it will be able to set things right once more. It will perform its function. That is why we devote the majority of our resources and efforts to opposing the Corrupter Wyrm, rather than dividing ourselves equally. This is the battle that *must* be won.

Grandfather Thunder

As Gaia is our mother, and the mother of all that is, so also does our tribe have a father. The chaos of creation gave rise to the Incarnae which guide us to this day, the most powerful of which is Grandfather Thunder. Like all things, he is of Gaia. He has since taken on a life of his own, however, and now watches over and protects his consort in the only way he knows how. The Lord of Storms is feared by many, but understood by few. Most see only fury and ambition, and overlook the traits that

drew Gaia to him in the first place. While Thunder's fury is indeed great, so also are his passion and his desire to protect those he finds worthy of his attentions.

Grandfather Thunder is a harsh master, but his rains bring life as well as death. It is easy to look upon the power of the storm and see only violence, but that same power washes away corruption and decay and calls forth life in once-barren lands. So it is with the society of the Garou. The fury of Grandfather Thunder will clear away the sickness which plagues our people, letting us rise to prominence and lead them to a brighter future. Doing so will carry a heavy price, but always remember that the ends, in this case, very much do justify the means. If the other Garou cannot see that, they will simply have to live with the consequences.

Grandfather Thunder demands much of his children, but his demands are not unreasonable. You are to understand fear, and use it to dominate those with weak minds that cannot or will not protect Gaia to the best of their abilities. At the same time, you must also understand respect, and bestow it upon those who are deserving of it. But most importantly, you must be an instrument of change, sweeping away the tethers of the past as you build a new and better future. This last duty is difficult for most Shadow Lords, since we have such a regimented and unforgiving society. And yet, this is the essence of what Grandfather Thunder represents; to ignore it is to ignore him, and that is unacceptable.

Thunder's Children

Grandfather Thunder has two main totems among his brood: these are Crow and Raven. In addition, he has a number of minor spirits serving him — you would do well to learn all their names, although I have time to name only a few.

Crow is often looked upon as a lesser spirit, but you should never forget that the structure of Shadow Lord society is based in large part upon that of crows. They are highly social animals, and Crow's nature reflects that. He rewards obedience and cooperation, and his children are often underestimated. This is a mistake, for they are capable scavengers and seekers of knowledge, and they often find value in the things others throw away. Crow's children also have good relationships with the Corax, and thus bring yet more information of value into the tribe. It may seem odd that Crow's children are closer to the Corax than Raven's children, but remember that Crow is garrulous and gregarious, and drawn to urban areas. The raven-skins are, in this way, more like

Crow than Raven, and they find the children of Crow closest to their hearts.

Raven is the stronger, and he is clever and resourceful. He is a dangerous spirit to follow, for he is a spirit of trickery as well as one of creation. He is much like Thunder himself in that way, though he is much more refined and urbane than his more powerful patron. Raven is also demanding, as he expects his children to be utterly self-sufficient and partial toward independent thought. If they win his favor, however, Raven grants his children insight and vision, and these are powerful gifts indeed.

Remember, too, that you may invoke our Grandfather's name when dealing with those of his brood; every Shadow Lord should know the proper forms of address when dealing with Stormcrows, night-spirits, spirits of pain and the others who offer allegiance to Grandfather Thunder. I advise you to offer your services to a Theurge and learn as much as he or she is willing to teach you. But don't expect a free education; our time is worth much more than yours, unless you're as much the prodigy as we expect you to be.

Auspices

Your relationship with Luna does much to define your expected role, and it may influence your personality, but your birth moon does not define you. I have seen New Moons who were vicious warriors, Crescent Moons who were powerful leaders, and Full Moons who have never participated in a battle in their lives. Still, it is important to understand what the auspices mean to us and how they are important, so listen carefully.

New Moon — Ragabash

The hidden moon is all about secrets, and Garou born during this time are obsessed with them. This makes them excellent spies, but do not think their talents end there — while many Ragabash are sneaky and conniving, an equal number are fierce if subtle fighters. Though rarely leaders, the hidden moons often use information to wield power far beyond their station. In many ways, the Ragabash captures the essence of what it means to be a Shadow Lord — they typically exhibit an insatiable curiosity and are thoroughly relentless, uncovering the hidden plots of their peers and exposing the misdeeds of all around them.

In the main, Ragabash are the crows of Shadow Lord society. If they assault our honor, we must prove capable enough to defend it. If we're found wanting we reveal weaknesses that allow others to tear us down, that we may be replaced by other, more capable leaders. The Ragabash also bring levity to our moots, reminding us of the things we fight for, and they force us to question our motives at every turn. Be wary of the Ragabash, particularly the one who plays the role of loyal beta. He will support you if he finds you worthy, but he will see you destroyed if he does not.

Crescent Moon — Theurge

If it can be said that Shadow Lords are obsessed with power, it can also be said that Theurges represent the core of that ambition. All of the rites and mysticism of our tribe rest in our capable claws, and we are born closer to Grandfather Thunder than any of the rest. While the Crescent Moons are relegated to supporting roles in many other Garou tribes, such is not the case with the Shadow Lords. Indeed, within our septs Theurges prove to be capable leaders more often than not, intimidating the strong with mystical power and controlling the weak with the same. One need only look at the Margrave, the greatest living Theurge of our tribe, to see how potent Garou born of this auspice can be, and how dangerous they are when roused to action.

Though we may be touched with ambition, Theurges play a central role in Shadow Lord society. We keep our brothers and sisters in touch with the Stormcrows and the rest of Grandfather Thunder's brood, and we channel the spirits who have eyes and ears that go far beyond our own mystical and mundane talents. We are pathfinders and seekers of truth, and our power comes from our ability to show the tribe the truths that go beyond the simple concerns of the Garou. We walk the sharp sickle of Luna's crescent, and although we may be cut, we bleed willingly for our knowledge.

Half Moon — Philodox

Even beyond our tribe, our Philodox — our judges — are well known. It falls to them to weigh our souls and deeds and pass judgment on us, and to punish us if they find us wanting. Some abuse this power, using the Litany as a weapon to lash out at political rivals. Most, however, take their role quite seriously, and would sooner die than see their vision corrupted by petty ambitions. It is the vision of such individuals which keeps our tribe ideologically pure, and which makes us fit to lead the other tribes in our battle to crush the Wyrm.

Though rarely leaders, our Philodox often take on the roles of counselors and arbiters of disputes within individual packs. While they rarely exhibit the ambition typical of Theurges and Ahroun, they are nonetheless coldly efficient when it comes to judging the behavior of their packmates. It's true that few take their role so seriously as do the Judges of Doom, but most are quite willing to cut their fellows down if they feel such individuals threaten a sept or tribe.

Gibbous Moon — Galliard

Garou born under the gibbous moon are taught to be taletellers and historians, the ones who remember the great deeds of Garou long gone and who act to inspire us in the here and now. This is as true of the Shadow Lords as it is for the Garou of any other tribe, but our Galliards also take great pleasure in reminding us of our past misdeeds. If ever a clever Ragabash exposes the plots of an overly ambitious pack leader, you can be sure that at least one Galliard will never let any of us forget the fact. Call them muckrakers if you will, but they nevertheless have an important role to play within the tribe — to a greater or lesser extent, they do a lot to keep us honest. We are a tribe who knows the value of secrecy, and the Galliards serve to emphasize that point.

Within the pack, Galliards often serve as a means of keeping pack members united and working together. They inspire us, tell us how even the most insane-seeming plans just might work, and show us the failures of those who have come before us. They are valued allies, so long as you can keep them on your side. Should you fall from their graces, however, they will become the worst enemies you have ever known.

Full Moon — Ahroun

The warriors of our tribe, Ahroun are the least subtle of the many weapons in our arsenal; but remember that "least subtle" does not necessarily mean "unsubtle," particularly where we are concerned. Whether an opponent is Wyrm or human, Ahroun will keep it at bay until the rest of us can put it down permanently. Filled with passion and rage, there is little subtle about the Ahroun. This does not mean, however, that they need always be physical in their conflicts. Many are masters of political maneuvering, and they use their great strength to terrify others into bowing before them without ever lifting a finger in violence.

Within the pack, Ahroun are Garou of great emotion and energy. While Ragabash and Theurges might favor trickery and deceit, Ahroun have no patience for such tactics. Whether it is a battle of words or klaives, they prefer their victories in the here and now, and to Malfeas with the consequences. This makes the full moons quick to anger and often overly ambitious, which can lead to catastrophe if their packmates do nothing to reign them in. Managing a young Ahroun is a tricky task, one requiring a balancing act between restraint and action. Let them act too soon and we tip our hand; hold them back too long, however, and they will destroy us from within. But the Ahroun who has seen many battles — there is a wolf that has learned the art of striking when the opponent is off-guard and staying his hand when the foe is too strong. Many an enemy who knew of our reputation and prepared himself against indirect action has been overthrown by a perfectly timed direct assault with an Ahroun at the head. It is said that fortune favors the bold, and it seems that Luna feels similarly.

The Rite of Passage

When a new Garou is found and brought into our tribe, we must determine his capabilities and, ultimately, his net worth for the tribe. We have to determine how he will express the traits drawn in broad strokes by his breed and auspice, and from there we have to determine his general level of competence and ability to contribute to the tribe. Thus, in a very crude sense, the Rite of Passage is not a little like an aptitude test of sorts, where we see how the cub performs under pressure and chart the course of his life with the Shadow Lords.

As werewolves go, we Shadow Lords are highly adaptable people. Even for Garou our traditions and culture vary tremendously from place to place, and the tests we use to determine the mettle of new recruits are no exception to this rule. Typically, they involve a number of exercises designed to gauge the cub's decision-making capabilities. We favor reason and guile over physical prowess, and so tests involving gamesmanship — or even actual games — are fairly common. In such tests, the goal is to outthink the people around you, be they Garou or humans or whatever else happens to be in the area.

A second common test seeks to gauge the loyalty of the subject, and the extent to which he can be trusted with secrets, responsibility, and, most importantly, power. This test is nearly always administered without the cub's knowledge, and it does much to determine the eventual role he will play in the politics of the tribe. The tests might last for weeks or months of time, sometimes even before the individual is approached by the tribe. We are not interested in initiating fools or blunderers into our mysteries, so the rituals of testing are sacred both to us and to our Grandfather. Take pride in your success, in your worthiness to be initiated into the tribe. You are a Lord now, and we expect the very best of you. Otherwise... heh. Best not to ask.

Breeds

The hulking black Hispo paced quietly around the seated cub, carefully staying just enough within the cub's personal space to establish his clear dominance. Finally, satisfied, he sat on his haunches and shed his fur, taking on the Glabro form. His eyes glittered as he began.

You have learned of our history, yes? And the way we interact with the spirit world? Mara taught you that as well? Good. What you have learned thus far centers around what the homids have to say about our tribe. You look at our history, and you see what humans see. You look at where we live and what we have done, and you see human geography, human migration, human thinking. It is homids who do the telling, but do not be deceived: They are still human, in all the ways that count. But what they forget, what most Garou forget, is that we are not simply werewolves sporting human cultures. We are a conglomeration of human culture and wolf custom, of human learning and wolf instincts. Your breed determines which of these hold prominence, and it means more than how you speak and the place you call home. It determines how you think, where your priorities lie, and what your role will be in Garou society. So listen carefully, you ingrate, for I am Roar-of-Storms, and I will tell you how the wolves among you think.

The Wolf-born: Lupus

The history of Europe, the politics of humans — these mean nothing to a lupus. A lupus knows only that humans fear him, that vampires hunt him, and that Gaia loves him. The wolves you see around you delve deeply into Garou tradition, drawing upon the mysticism of the Umbra and the teachings of Gaia and Grandfather Thunder to sustain them in a world that is not their own. They gravitate toward the camps more than the other breeds, particularly the Children of Crow and the Judges of Doom. These are groups who live on the fringes of Garou society, just as the lupus themselves do.

We wolf-born are much less interested in politicking than are homid Lords, and in some ways this removes us from the heart of Garou society. But at the same time, we are much closer to the will of Gaia than homids will ever be, and this gives us a power that offsets our political disadvantages. Even the great Margrave bows before the wisdom of the great lupus Theurges of our tribe — and if he does, you had better do so as well. Despite our power, however, our influence within the tribe is diminishing. There are few of us left nowadays, and while our wolf Kin are regaining some of their former strength it will nevertheless be quite some time before we return to a place of prominence within the tribe.

The Human-born: Homids

Homids form the bulk of the tribe, and as such their perspective does more to shape the tribe's methodology and goals than any other. Their history is human history, and by default that becomes our history. They weave themselves into human cultures, learning to manipulate them to our advantage, and they take the lessons learned in the process and apply them to the politics of the Garou Nation. In this sense they define us, making us a twisted reflection of humanity even as we lose the wolf within ourselves.

Homid Shadow Lords are often Lords of the Summit, thirsting for power as they try to define themselves within the context of the tribe. They are intensely political animals, and are particularly well suited to the task of dealing with the other supernatural entities in the world. Where the lupus among us look on vampires and mages with loathing and disgust, the homids can negotiate their way through these beings' social circles and destroy them from within. For better or worse, the way of the homid seems to be the way of the future, and we must hope that their political acumen will be enough to offset the widening rift forming between us and Gaia.

The Garou-born: Metis

Denied the connection to Gaia known by the wolf-born, and much less able to move unnoticed in human society, the metis are doubly cursed. Be that as it may, however, they do have an advantage the rest of us cannot match: they were born in Garou society, and thus are more familiar with it than either lupus or homid Lords. They know all the traditions, all the customs, all the intricacies of our moots and rites in ways that the hastily inducted homids and lupus cannot fully comprehend. If the lupus share a special connection to Gaia and homids share a similar connection with humanity, we might say the metis have the same sort of connection with the Garou. They are both more and less than the rest of us, and that gives them a unique role within our society that can be used or exploited to great effect.

Metis Garou know the faults of all our many camps, and hence tend to avoid them where possible. They are often persecuted, though not so much as in some other tribes, such as the Fianna. They use the resentment generated by this ill treatment to fuel their resolve to find their place in the tribe, and they are easily as manipulating, conniving, and inventive as any of us. Though often underestimated, more than one grand plan has hinged on the favor of a metis. While they may never rise through the ranks of the tribe to become leaders, they may nonetheless prove crucial elements in the battles to come. This is the reason the Margrave has worked to reduce the stigma attached to the breed, at least in his own domain, and why our policies toward them are changing accordingly.

Dominance

Some time ago, a young cliath found herself vexed by a troubling question: why dominance? Why is it so important to the Shadow Lords, and why does it so define our tribe? Her confusion is perhaps not surprising, seeing as how she was a lupus by breed. She was also a New Moon, a Ragabash, and so she could not simply let the question go. She needed an answer, and she set out to get one — no matter how unsettling her curiosity might be to others.

Her first victims were her own packmates. They did not understand her confusion, for they were homids. Of course there was a dominance hierarchy within the tribe! Why would there not be? That's just how large organizations work. The Lords were particularly cutthroat about it in some ways, but many human societies were like that. But of course, the cliath wasn't a human, and did not particularly want to be human, and so this did not satisfy her. So she did the only thing she could think to do: she went and pestered an elder. This was perhaps not the wisest course of action available to her, but it is what she chose to do nonetheless.

The first elder she approached was a homid of great renown. She had been among the Lords for quite some time, and was known to be a severe and unforgiving personality. Some said that was because she was born under a full moon, but others figured it was just because she was mean. In any event, the cliath posed her question to the elder: Why are we so concerned about dominance? The elder told her much the same thing her packmates had, and added the following: "Is this not the way it is among wolves? Do they not have alphas and betas, omegas and outcasts?" The cliath was surprised the elder knew so little about wolves, but even one so impertinent as she knew how disrespectful it is to correct one's elders, and so she said nothing. She thanked the elder for her time, and went elsewhere in her search for answers.

The second elder she spoke to was not much of an elder, on account of the fact that he was a metis. But he had lived among the Shadow Lords all his life, and so the cliath was certain he would be able to explain why the Shadow Lords were the way they were. She was thus quite surprised when he said he could tell her nothing of the sort. "It is all I have ever known, you see. So far as I know, we are this way because it is the way we have always been, and hence the way we ought to be. It works for us, and it is necessary, so is that not enough?" That wasn't enough, and he could tell by the expression on the cliath's face that she was not satisfied with his answer. And he told her to speak to the oldest lupus in the sept, for he was certain that Garou would have the answers she sought.

The cliath did as the metis bade her. She found the grizzled old lupus, the most revered Crescent Moon in the entire sept. She said to him, "Why are we so concerned with dominance?" He understood her question — dominance is quite important to the Garou, but it is an alien concept to a wolf, and the cliath was still thinking like a wolf. The homids think that wolves have dominance hierarchies, but this is not true. Wolf packs are families, and the dominance they exhibit is that of elder to younger, not alpha to beta. And the homids ask how that can be, when only the alpha pair mates. How egalitarian can they be when only one pair in the pack mates? But what they forget, or perhaps never bothered to learn, is the fact that the wolves in the pack who aren't alphas are the children of the alphas. How could they mate, when incest is as taboo among wolves as it is among humans? It is nonsense.

But the lupus reminded her that the Garou are not like wolves. They are not a family, and they do not live for the sake of their Kin. They are forced to realize that there are more urgent matters than hunting for one's family, and chasing crows, and listening to the songs Gaia sings to us, and raising our cubs. There are vampires that stalk us, Wyrm-things that try to corrupt us, and humans that want to exterminate us. We cannot survive these things unless we fight, and we can only fight if we are of one mind. We have to think and act as one, because otherwise our divisiveness will tear us apart. Look at the state of the Garou Nation, he said, and you can see the truth of these words. We need one voice, and the only way to achieve that is via dominance. That is why it exists. That is why it is so important to us. That is why you must learn to use it to your advantage, so that you may be the voice of your pack, or sept, or tribe.

As the lupus finished his lesson, he scrutinized the young Garou before him. He could see that the cliath had found her answer, and the look in her eyes told him that she was not pleased. But he also saw in her a mixture of understanding and resolve, and he knew that his tribe had not seen the last of her – she and her questions would continue to test the tribe, and that pleased the old lupus greatly.

Kinfolk

If you ask the typical Shadow Lord whom we tend to pick as mates, he will no doubt tell you we seek out people in power. Visionary types, princes and ministers, generals and magnates, and let the peasantry be damned. A moment's thought will tell you that things are not as simple as this; since most of these powerful individuals are men, our breeding stock would soon be quite limited, even given that the sex ratio within the tribe is fairly even. Additionally, lupus Lords couldn't care less about humans one might label as being politically powerful. So, one would expect our criteria to be a bit more complex, and that is indeed the case.

First and foremost, we demand intelligence in our Kin. Be they human or wolf, they have to be more aware, more capable, more insightful than others of their kind. But there's more to it than that. We want our Kin to be as cunning as they are intelligent, so that they might be subtle enough to hide their ambitions in addition to being clever enough to develop them in the first place. Perhaps most importantly, we expect our Kin to be ambitious, to thirst for change, and to be willing to do whatever it takes to make it so. If they are not willing to be disobedient, patient, and clever, we want nothing to do with them.

We have no particular cultural interest in the selection of our Kin. While we have traditionally chosen from Eastern European breeding stock (both human and wolf), that's simply because those were the choices available to us. As the world has become more interconnected, we have expanded our options accordingly. Now, we count among our Kin individuals of every race and ethnicity in the world, and of every wolf population in existence. From Siberian humans to Mexican wolves, we take the best and the brightest the world has to offer and make them our own.

Shadow Moots

When you look around you at a moot, what is it that you see? A collection of Garou, surely, but what else? Let me tell you what I see. I see Garou of many tribes, with many agendas, and with many ideas of what needs to be done to fight the Wyrm. I see more people with opinions than I care to name, and none with any real idea as to how to turn the tribes into a force to be reckoned with. I see discord, where everyone agrees on the need to fight the Wyrm, to control humanity, and to do what needs to be done, but no agreement on who should lead that effort, or when or where it should take place. I see chaos disguised as order and progress. I see stagnation, and I am not alone in my observations. Indeed, many other Shadow Lords feel as I do, and a number of them chose to act on those feelings generations ago. Thus was born the shadow moot.

Becoming a Shadow Lord

Roar of Storms offers some advice: Feeling overwhelmed yet, pup? Don't get discouraged. Few Lords take to the tribe easily, mainly because our way of life is so different from anything humans or wolves have to offer. We start with a dominance hierarchy, as I'm sure you're aware. This is something you see in wolves, but only when they are unrelated — it's alien to most wolf packs, since they're mostly just family units. But you see, we Shadow Lords are ourselves mostly unrelated, so the dominance instincts of the wolf are brought to the forefront of our dealings with one another, and they serve to give us clarity and order even in the midst of utter chaos. A wolf introduced to a stranger must establish who is dominant, so that he understands the relationship between the two; so it is with us. These instincts may seem harsh, but we need them to function in the extreme environments we protect. Learn the importance of dominance and submission, and you will adapt to life among us more easily.

But it's not just the dominance that bothers you, is it? No, I can see it in your eyes — you're torn because, in addition to dominance, we also force you to deal with politics. This is something we inherit from the human half of our ancestry, and it's just as important to us as dominance is. We need politics to survive within the Garou Nation, to trick our opponents into working against one another, and to use our enemies' own ways against them. We take politicking to extremes, and even the homids are intimidated by our ways. But you have to get used to it. If you don't, you'll never get anywhere within the tribe.

What's that? Heh. Yes, I know what you mean. Politics does run counter to a dominance hierarchy in some respects, and vice versa. That's part of the problem for cubs like you — you're getting pulled in two directions, and you need to learn your place and learn how to exploit others at the same time. But it's a balancing act; once you find your center, you'll learn how far you can push on the one hand, and when not to push on the other. It takes time, and effort, and above all thought. But that's fine; you're a smart cub, so I think you'll do okay.

So, what are shadow moots? In simplest terms, they are strategy sessions wherein high-ranking members of the tribe hash out ways in which they can manipulate other Garou — and occasionally, other supernatural entities — into doing the work that needs to be done for the good of Gaia. Since the tribes will not come to a consensus on what must be done, and since the Silver Fangs will not offer us the leadership needed to accomplish our goals, the shadow moots are all we have left to us. That is, at least, the way they work in theory. In practice, many are corrupted into vehicles to advance the ambitions of individual Lords and their packs, which of course undercuts the effectiveness of the moots to begin with and turns them into yet another way to let high-ranking Lords bicker with one another. This is one reason why the Silver Fangs have risen to prominence in America. Thankfully, the same is not true in our homelands, where the Margrave has used shadow moots to great effect, and even now brings the Garou of Europe together in ways the Silver Fangs have never been able to.

As your time with the tribe increases, you will hear much about shadow moots. Some of it is true, but most is not. The details vary from place to place, but any you hear which are "true" most likely are not. Some leaders like to name all of the positions in the moot, talking of crows and ravens and such, and many practice rituals of various sorts which might seem odd to other Garou. But just as many skip the rituals altogether, and instead get down to the business at hand. This is particularly true in septs outside of Europe, where traditions are not so important as they are here.

Should you ever be invited to a shadow moot, be aware that the invitation itself is a great honor, and conduct yourself accordingly. Remember that the rituals practiced at the moot are absolute, and that they are not open to negotiation except at the whim of the moot leader. Remember also that a different set of rules applies at these moots, and you are on your own when you attempt to negotiate them. Renown is not important, and neither is rank. Only ideas count, along with the will to act on them when need be.

Camps

A slight woman with a crooked smile joins the small group of instructors, carefully choosing a seat neither too near nor too far from the others. She takes a final drag on

her cigarette, then extinguishes it on a nearby rock, paying no attention to the low growl from Roar-of-Storms.

I imagine I should take over from here, Roar-of-Storms. You said it yourself; lupus are less interested in the politics of the tribes than homids like me are. Pity, too; you miss out on some interesting things that way. Hello, child. I am Alexandra Longest-Shadow, and I know things.

We Shadow Lords are unique among the Garou in the fact that we share a clarity of purpose unmatched by any other tribe. This is, of course, a lie. While most of us are aware of that purpose to a greater or lesser extent, the hard truth of the matter is that we are more interested in our personal agendas than we are in any higher goal. All of us lust for power, but most have forgotten the reasons why we pursue such ends, and why the ends we seek most certainly justify any means we might employ to achieve them. All we're interested in now is our own, personal glory, and the camps are the result of such ambitions.

None of the camps are actively opposed to one another, but all pursue the path to power in different fashions. In the eyes of the elders, this diversity only serves to strengthen the tribe. Competition makes us stronger, and divergent philosophies yield opportunities missed by other, simpler credos. In the end, it doesn't really matter if you throw your lot in with one camp or another, or even none at all; one way or another, all of the camps serve the ends of the tribe, and that is why they are tolerated.

The Bringers of Light

The Bringers of Light have been and continue to remain some of the most selfless Garou on the planet. They also put the lie to the image of Shadow Lords as conniving schemers interested only in advancing their own status and power. Like all Lords, the Bringers of Light seek information. They wish to master the ways of the Wyrm, so that they might destroy that entity's influence from within. They run with vampires, masquerade as Black Spiral Dancers, and walk among fomori so that by understanding the Wyrm's power they can better subvert it, using it to advance the goals of the tribe. Many fall, of course; the path they choose is quite dangerous, and they risk death at the hands of those around them as well as corruption from the touch of the Wyrm. But those who survive are among the greatest the Garou have to offer, and they use their knowledge and their status to stage some of the most devastating raids on the Wyrm's minions the world has ever seen.

While the Bringers of Light are technically a camp, it might be better to call them a brotherhood of sorts. They don't usually run in packs, and they don't hold shadow moots as most of the other camps do. They have no secret agenda to speak of, and as a result they speak plainly whenever the need arises. In place of Shadow Moots, then, the Lightbringers forge informal networks with one another, sharing tips and strategies for fighting the Wyrm. These networks also allow them to search for up-and-coming Lords who might share their interests in subverting the Wyrm from within. Potential students are approached when it is safe and convenient to do so, and they study for a short while with an established member of the camp before setting off on their own.

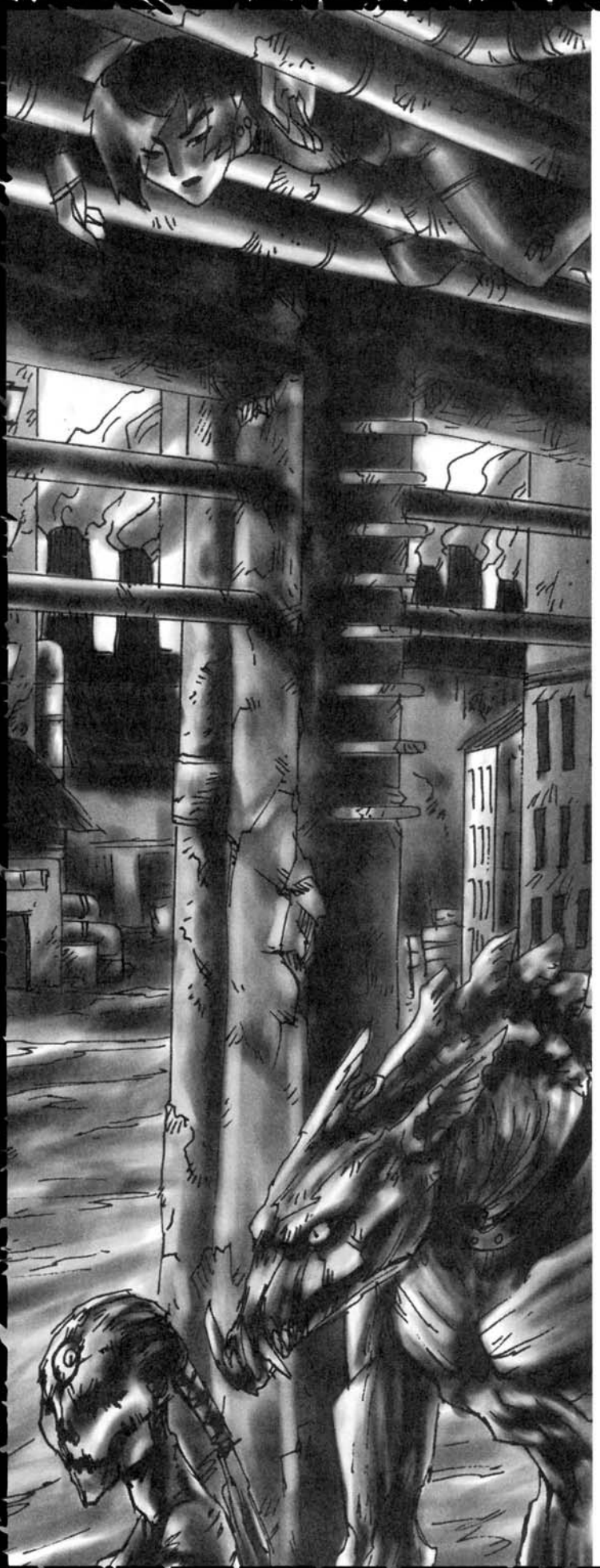
Survival in the Belly of the Wyrm

Bringers of Light often work alone, which exposes them to great risk on a regular basis. To cope with this risk, Lightbringers often take on personal totems, earning the enmity of many Garou septs in the process. This is one of the few cases where it is appropriate for a Garou to take on a personal totem. Totems chosen in this fashion are typically Crow, Fox, Grandfather Thunder, and Raven, but other choices are also possible with the Storyteller's permission. Additional guidelines for using personal totems in a chronicle are given in the **Players Guide to the Garou.**

The Children of Crow

While the Bringers of Light sacrifice themselves in a very personal sense for the good of the tribe, the Children of Crow do so in a more traditional fashion. Always sticking to the shadows, they are in many ways the epitome of what it means to be a true Shadow Lord. They are not interested in personal power for its own sake, nor in leadership of any sort. Rather, they work their magic in secret, catching details in their environment and uncovering secrets buried in the hearts and minds of others, using this information to destroy the enemies of the Garou and to free Gaia from the Wyrm's clutches, bit by bit. They are more than willing to debase themselves for the sake of others, and their actions free many of us to bring other, more potent schemes to fruition. They are loyal betas, and most Garou could learn much from their dedication.

The Children of Crow have close ties with the Corax, and hence are among the most well informed Garou in the world. Though they will not (usually) use this information for personal gain, they have no compunctions against destroying an unfit leader so that others might take his place. Many a Lord has dismissed a Child of Crow, knowing he has no ambitions for power, only to find a knife in his back as the Child opens the ranks for another, worthier successor.



The Judges of Doom

The Judges of Doom are quite possibly the most feared camp in the entire Garou Nation, and with good reason. They seek out and destroy those Garou who flagrantly violate the tenets of the Litany, and they pursue their agendas with ruthless zeal. They are pitiless and remorseless, and cloaked in an aura of mystery that only adds to their fearsome reputations. Fearsome as they are, however, some more observant Lords have noticed that there seem to be two factions of Judges in the world — and they are at war with one another. The factions are unnamed, but center on a basic ideological rift. Many Judges destroy Garou because they can, and use such activities to demonstrate their power over other werewolves. These beings are simple murderers, using the Litany as an excuse to destroy their enemies. The other Judges, the "true" Judges, as it were, are much more circumspect in their activities. They have been known to hunt down and destroy entire septs of Garou, eliminating them quickly and quietly so that the rest of us can go about their work. That's the most extreme example, of course, and tends to apply only when the entire sept has done something like allowing a caern to be violated — by inviting human magi within the boundaries, or something similar. When possible, the "true" Judges eliminate their rival Judges as well, and for the same reasons.

Within the tribe, the Judges of Doom are a controversial topic. Some feel the secrecy they guarantee is necessary for the proper functioning of the tribe, and by extension the Nation as a whole. Others, however, feel that the killing of Garou is something to be avoided if at all possible, and view the Judges as extremists who act without the sanction of the rest of the tribe. Both views have merit, but it is the first school of thought that predominates in the tribe today. The fact that the Judges have the tacit support of none other than Margrave Konietzko himself doesn't hurt their image a bit.

Pray you never encounter a Judge. It is difficult to earn their wrath — contrary to popular belief, they do not hunt Garou for trivial transgressions of the Litany. Only the false Judges are so hidebound and impractical. Be that as it may, however, they have eyes everywhere, and they are watching. And if you make their hit list, they will be the last things you ever see in this world. Remember this, and let it encourage you to treat the Litany as the sacred thing it is.

The Lords of the Summit

The most populous Shadow Lord camp, the Lords of the Summit typify the modern Shadow Lord — for better or worse. The lure of power intoxicates them,

and they will do anything in their power to bring it within their grasp. The rationale behind gaining power is lost on them — they no longer care for the reasons why we seek to manipulate other Garou, and they do not understand why competition within our tribe is so fierce. Power is the end for them, not merely a means to an end, and as such dominance and control are their meat and drink. They often find themselves victims of either the Judges of Doom or the Children of Crow, since their desires have little to do with the tribe and everything to do with their own self-aggrandizement. Avoiding this camp is impossible these days, but you would be wise not to join it. Few of its members come to healthy ends.

That said, however, the Lords of the Summit do have one worthy goal: to unify the tribes under their leadership, and (theoretically) crush the Wyrm thereafter. This goal is used to justify the camp's existence, and it is why young Lords are drawn to the camp. It is also how established Lords of the Summit secure and maintain their position; by demonstrating their strength and ability to rule, they can quiet dissent before it becomes a problem. This puts the higher-ranking members of this camp in a position to accomplish quite a bit, when all is said and done. Pity so few of them make good on their rhetoric.

Secret Societies

As with any large society, there are a few Shadow Lords that choose to follow paths unsanctioned by the tribe. Unlike the camps, which are recognized and politically significant factions within the tribe, the Garou of these societies operate in secret, hiding their true allegiances from their allies and even their packmates. It is thus entirely possible for a Shadow Lord to be a member of one of these groups even if he is also a member of one of the true camps. Circles within circles. It's how we work.

The Hakken

It is assumed by many, even within our tribe, that the Eastern Garou known as the Hakken are Shadow Lords of some sort. This is, in fact, far from the truth. Though they are children of Grandfather Thunder, as we are, they are not the whelps of our tribe's progenitors; rather, they trace their ancestry to Grandfather Thunder himself, just as we do. Thus, they are not merely an Eastern branch of our tribe, despite our common roots and practices. They are Hakken, from start to finish, and they are a tribe of Garou unto themselves. Thus, since we have no special ties with them, we will not discuss them in any great detail here.

The Children of Bat

No longer a real secret of any note, the Children of Bat are defined by the fact that they suffer from a guilt complex. Most have ancestors who participated in the second War of Rage, and as a result they look to the partial redemption of Bat as a sign of hope and absolution. They are, for the most part, fairly deluded individuals, pretending they are responsible for the sins of their forefathers and letting their sense of guilt guide their actions in the here and now. It should be obvious that the time has come to put the past behind us and move forward, even as we learn from our mistakes to tread more carefully in the future. But these fools wallow in the pain they feel they've caused, and hope to undo it and make things right again. What they fail to understand is that, even if they're successful, it won't help us in the here and now – at best it will appease the souls of the dead, and we don't have time for that now. Their hearts might be noble, but their intentions are misplaced, and that might cost us dearly when all is said and done.

The Lazarite Movement

The Lazarite Movement, a sort of solidarity movement among metis Garou of all tribes, has lost most of its forward momentum among the Shadow Lords since the Margrave rose to power. Simply put, the tribe cannot afford to discard any Shadow Lords in the fight against the Wyrm, and the more pragmatic leaders of our tribe have reduced the stigma attached to metis Garou accordingly. The acceptance these shamed ones now find in the septs of the tribe has all but crushed support for the Lazarite Movement, and in a very real sense it is no longer needed within the tribe. Fragments remain, but even the most vocal of the movement's members have become relatively silent, since they have no real political footing to speak of.

The Masks

Until recently, a highly secretive cabal of Shadow Lords calling themselves the Masks terrorized many of our lower-ranked members, as well as any humans unlucky enough to cross their path. They lived on the fear they caused, and their perverse fascination with that emotion led them to commit acts of depravity that matched even the foulest acts of the Wyrm. I am happy to report that, with the rise of the Margrave's star, such nonsense has been fairly thoroughly stamped out. While some Masks may yet remain, the vast majority have been given the punishments they so richly deserved — sometimes at the hands of the Judges of Doom, but more often by whole packs of Garou who simply refused to tolerate such lunacy for even a minute longer. Good riddance, I say.

The Society of Nidhogg

As with the Masks, these Lords once wielded a fair bit of power within the tribe. They worshipped the night, made sacrifices to Grandfather Thunder, and even made unholy alliances with some of our most hated vampire allies. Some claim they hoped to plunge the world into eternal darkness, while others go so far as to indicate they wanted to hasten the coming Apocalypse. Either way, Gaia was the least of their concerns, and they were a blight upon us all. As the Lords became more organized in the wake of Russia's liberation and the Margrave's rise in status, we crushed this society beneath our feat, stamping it out utterly. Those few who escaped public condemnation faced the wrath of the Judges of Doom, and those worthy scions of our race destroyed the society utterly. From time to time we hear that someone or other has started practicing those dark rituals once again, but none of these reports ever proves to be substantial. If you encounter any such beings, alert your elders immediately so that we might send them exactly where they belong.

The Litany

Alexandra stretches. "Have you talked about the Litany yet, Mara?"

The Theurge bares her teeth in reply.

Binding nobles and peasantry alike, the Litany is our most sacred code. All Garou, no matter their tribe, bow to the tenets which have bound us to one another and the world around us since the birth of our kind, oh so many years ago. However, while none may flaunt their disregard of the Litany with impunity, it is nonetheless true that different tribes and, indeed, different septs within each tribe choose to ascribe different meanings to the letter of the laws on which we all agree. These are matters of obeisance and tradition, and you must understand them if you are to prosper within the tribe.

Garou Shall Not Mate With Garou

The cardinal rule, this law of the Litany may never be broken without severe consequences. None are immune to this, no matter their station. From Gaia we were created, to preserve the wolf and guard the human, and we must never forget this. The Garou are your pack, but it is to humans and wolves that you must turn when siring children. We do this to continue our lines, to fortify our hold on humanity, and to ensure that we may walk among them unnoticed.

Alexandra adds: Note that "mate" here does not merely refer to the production of offspring; it refers to sex as well. The purpose of this law is to keep our attention on the humans and wolves we are charged to protect, not to prevent the production of metis. They're a by-product, the proof that we've fouled things up, nothing more.

Combat the Wyrm Wherever It Dwells and Whenever It Breeds

Another of our most sacred tenets, and one that is often forgotten or ignored by the young or the foolish. Far too many Lords place their own personal gains above the needs of the tribe, which can only weaken us. Be that as it may, this law is one whose influence is heavily colored by interpretation. Remember that strength is more than physical, and that the battle with the Wyrm is fought on many different battlefields. Do not be afraid to use other tribes to obey this law. Any fighting force needs strategists as well as warriors to be effective, and you must always remember fall into the former camp. If you are clever, you will find that you can use the other tribes to destroy the Wyrm and also advance your own position within the tribe. If you are foolish, however, you will only be consumed by your own ambition. Tread carefully.

Roar-of-Storms disagrees: Bah! An excuse for cowardice! It is of course a given that we are to manipulate the actions of our alphas for the greater good; that is Thunder's mandate, and we carry it out. But this "interpretation" business is nonsense. If what we're doing doesn't involve directly fighting the Wyrm at some point or another, we're doing something wrong.

Respect the Territory of Another

It is a given that we must be mindful of the fact that, as a mix of wolf and human instincts, we Garou tend to be quite territorial. While it is a wise thing to respect the boundaries of such territories, you should always remember that it is only overt displays of aggression which are typically frowned upon. Do not let this law restrict your activities overmuch; we are, after all, in a war for survival, and trivialities such as this one need only be respected in the broadest sense of the term.

Alexandra cautions: Do not lure the cub into a false sense of complacency, Mara. Disobeying this law could get you killed as quickly as it takes to tell the tale, so it must be observed whenever possible. It is mostly a matter of courtesy and ceremony, which means observing it is no great bother.

Accept an Honorable Surrender

While all the tribes agree that this law is reasonably important, it is of particular relevance to our tribe. Only other Garou or, infrequently, other Fera, can offer a truly honorable surrender; Wyrmspawn do not warrant such consideration. This means that accepting an honorable surrender leaves your opponent beholden to you, which gives you a tremendous advantage over that individual and all that are allied with him.

Roar-of-Storms adds: Always turn a surrender to your advantage; use the power it grants you to advance your position, and thus better enable you to orchestrate battles against the Wyrm. Also remember that not every surrender is honorable. If you suspect an opponent is being dishonest, you may feel free to kill him on the spot.

Alexandra agrees: This is particularly relevant in Klaive duels, which are sometimes fought to the death. An opponent who surrenders in this instance is either attempting to trick you, or not very honorable to begin with. Dispatching him is thus perfectly legal.

Submission to Those of Higher Station

Heh. There is submission, and then there is submission. Always bow to your betters, but do not let them cow you into submission unless they truly *are* your betters. Remember that your ultimate goal is to strengthen the Garou Nation, and orchestrate its battle against the Wyrm and its minions. Do not allow others to impede that goal, no matter their rank or supposed capabilities. By the same token, however, you must swallow your pride and bow before those who are executing their duties in good faith. You must never interfere with plans or operations which directly harm the Wyrm, unless your own would do so more effectively.

Pavel adds: Remember that Grandfather Thunder himself tells us that we should only follow those who are worthy of our obedience. This means we can essentially ignore this law so long as we are acting in good faith. Many a Lord has tried to defend treachery using that excuse, though, so be sure you know what you're doing before you disobey an elder.

The First Share of the Kill for the Greatest in Station

Many of our laws are of cardinal importance to us, but this is not one of them. It is a holdover from older, simpler times, and has little application now. The kill is to be divided according to the guile and cleverness of those who make it, and if the highest ranking Lord is not clever enough to take what he desires, that is no concern to the rest of us. So long as you act with proper decorum and do not endanger the other laws of the Litany, you need not bother yourself with such trivial concerns.

Roar-of-Storms disagrees: Not so fast, Mara! This law is important, since it reinforces the pack's structure and reminds us to respect a worthy leader. Elders must be respected, and you can bet that they're worthy if they've lasted long enough to become elders. Do not dismiss this law lightly.

Ye Shall Not Eat the Flesh of Humans

The wisdom of this law should be obvious. Even the wolf-born must not violate it, for doing so will only undermine our already tenuous relationship with humanity. It is the corruption of the Wyrm that con-

sumes human and beast alike, and it is that corruption that we fight with all the tools at our disposal.

Roar-of-Storms points out: The intent of the law may be obvious, but the fact remains that we are creatures of Rage, and hence have the potential to sin even if the consequences are obvious for all to see. This law exists to ensure that we keep humans away from our battles, so that they do not become unfortunate victims of our frenzied ways.

That said, I hear they're rather tasty, from a wolf point of view. I wouldn't know that myself, of course. Just something I've heard, here and there.

Respect Those Beneath Ye — All Are of Gaia

Many of the other tribes, and not a few of the Lords, take the "beneath ye" in this law to refer to other Garou, and treat them accordingly. That is, of course, the farthest thing from the intent of this statute. The interaction of Garou is dealt with in other laws; this one refers to the relationship between the Garou and the other living things in the world. It reminds us to tread lightly upon the Earth, and that the people, and animals, and spirits of the world are significant, even if they do not figure strongly in our plans. These things are not trivial; indeed, they are the very reason we fight. Always remember this, lest your ambition cloud your judgment. Many a Lord has fallen when the Garou around him realize that he cares nothing for the world beyond his petty schemes.

Alexandra clarifies: Of course, this applies to prey as well — even though you eat them, you still have to show them the proper respect. Some Garou get all mystical about this, but that isn't necessary; all you have to remember is that respect and killing aren't exclusive concepts, and shouldn't hamper your decisions as though they were.

The Veil Shall Not Be Lifted

We respect this law due not to any particular veneration for what it represents, but rather out of a healthy sense of pragmatism. Humans have always feared us, and with the advent of an industrialized civilization they now have the tools to turn that fear into hatred and persecution. What's more, new threats such as hunters with strange powers are showing up every day, and it is only through secrecy and prudence that we can manage to stay a step or two ahead of them. Remember that most of the other supernatural entities in the world seek to pervert or consume it in some fashion. The vampires violate it by their mere existence, the mages twist it to suit their whims, and the ghosts resist the most basic dictums of Gaia Herself. These are our enemies, and they are legion; we must work against them in secret if we are to have any hope of destroying them.

Alexandra speculates: It's possible that Gaia created the Veil to remind us that we are not truly a part of the world. In the natural scheme of things, there would be no Wyrmspawn, no vampires, no maddened Weaver to throw things out of whack. But these things do exist, and so Gaia created us to deal with them. Be that as it may, She still wants to keep the world as "normal" as possible, and to that end she gave us a curtain to hide behind. Whether that's true or not, it's something to keep in mind.

Do Not Suffer Thy People to Tend Thy Sickness

This rule stems from the ways of the wolf. Roar-of-Storms, if you would?

Roar-of-Storms: Mmmm. If a warrior, to say nothing of a leader, is not fit to pull his own weight within a sept, then he is not fit to live. That may sound harsh, but it's the truth. We have limited resources, and we can't waste them on old or feeble Garou. If you cannot continue to contribute to our cause, you must have the presence of mind to step aside and let other, more capable Garou take your place. Remember that our survival is at stake here; we can't afford to be lax when it comes to honoring this law.

Alexandra responds: At the same time, however, you also have to remember that this is not a club you may use to remove leaders you happen to find inconvenient. Even an old and frail leader can prove to be surprisingly fit in mind and spirit, and if he is capable of performing his duties you damn well better mind your business and leave him be. Challenge the unfit, but do remember that it takes more than being old to qualify. Pick your challenges carefully, lest you yourself be culled for the good of the pack.

The Leader May Be Challenged at Any Time During Peace

This isn't just an option for us; rather, it's a mandate. Our leaders must be continually tested to keep them in fighting trim, and that means making power plays when you can get away with it. Any leader worth his position won't let you get away with much, and they'll expect you to keep things interesting on a fairly regular basis. A common problem with this law, of course, is that many of the leaders who should be challenged are far more powerful than those intrepid Garou who realize their pack leader must be removed from power. Should you find yourself in this unfortunate position, do not be concerned; everyone has enemies, and those enemies will be in your debt if you choose to help them topple a corrupt pack leader. This

is a dangerous ploy, however, so be sure of your motives and allies when you pursue such a course of action.

Alexandra cuts loose: Okay, that's the party line. Now, remember this: many Lords think it's okay to embarrass or undermine their leaders for their own personal gain. Most of these Lords will be dead by the year's end. Don't be a fucking asshole. Don't sabotage plans that work to combat the Wyrm or its minions. Don't let innocents or, worse, Garou get killed just to make a leader look bad. Remember that you're a champion of Gaia, and act like it. Yes, we manipulate the other tribes when our plans call for it. We even manipulate other Lords, if they're so stupid that they don't see it coming. But always remember why it is we're doing this: to fight the Wyrm. This isn't about *you*, you little shit. We're fighting for a cause, and that comes first. Make your challenges accordingly. If you don't understand that, *you* will be dead within a week of taking control of your first pack.

The Leader May Not Be Challenged During Wartime

Some Lords will tell you that we are always at war, and that as such they cannot be challenged at any time. This is a lie. While some areas are constantly under siege from vampires, Banes, or other minions of the Wyrm, the fact is that this law only applies during battle. Never challenge a leader during battle, but should he prove unfit you are obligated to challenge him as soon as the battle ends. You must do this not only to advance your own status, but also to maintain the integrity of your pack and, ultimately, the tribe as a whole.

Pavel adds: This doesn't just apply to battle, either. The leader shouldn't be challenged so long as the pack is trying to accomplish something. Basically, this law isn't just a law — it's a way of life. Stay on target, get your tasks done, and deal with any problems in leadership only after your immediate task is completed. We have to do it that way, because if we don't the result is chaos.

Ye Shall Take No Action T hat Causes a Caern to Be Violated

Roar-of-Storms snarls: This law is unquestioned, even by the most ambitious Lords. Violate this law, and you will not merely be punished. You will die. Painfully. We cannot afford to lose, or even endanger, any of the few caerns we have left, and you are not to allow even the possibility of a threat to their sanctity. There are no exceptions to this rule — even if you act in good faith, actions that cause a caern to be violated are punishable by death. No exceptions. Ever.

Shadow Lords Around the World

Alexandra resumes the narrative.

What we should stress here, of course, is that everything we tell you should apply, more or less, to the way the tribe works wherever you find it. But in practice, things are different from place to place. We have a unity that no humans can ever hope to share, all bound by our oaths to the Mother and to Grandfather Thunder. But distance and local culture can change things, to say nothing of how dramatically local concerns can differ from place to place.

Europe

Now as never before, Europe is the stronghold of our tribe. With the fall of the Iron Curtain and the disintegration of the Silver Fangs, the Garou of Europe look to us for leadership, and we are more than willing to provide it. We have forged a union so powerful that even the Fenrir and the Black Furies are working side by side with no complaints. We are bringing order to the Balkans, slaughtering the vampires, which infest our homelands, and punishing the humans that think they have a right to persecute the weak and pollute the Earth. In many ways, it seems as though we have passed a turning point. As the European Union grows in power, its stabilizing influence lets us push back the influence of the vampires that have plagued us for so long. The wars among humans are ending, and we are finally taking back what is ours. Even the wolves are finding their fortunes on the rise; once all but extinct in Europe, they are spreading west into their former territories, and as humans learn to tolerate them they are even coming into the cities, living their lives without malice or fear.

We have the Margrave to thank for this. A powerful Theurge of great renown, he looked upon our tribe and saw the backstabbing and the politicking, the vile secret societies and the abominable alliances, and by sheer force of will crushed it all beneath his heel. As Europe's fortunes began to rise he rode the wave, taking the opportunity to unify the disparate elements of our tribe into an organized fighting force capable of destroying our enemies and bringing hope to the Wyld. Most Garou fear the Margrave, and all respect him. They might question his ethics, his motives, and his methods, but they cannot question his results — he has stolen power from Garou and vampire alike, and he is using it to bring the world to its knees. For decades we've watched the destruction of Gaia spiral out of control, and it's time we did something about it. For

the Margrave, that something goes beyond pissing and moaning about the sorry state of the world today. He's going to change the world, if he has to kill every man, woman and child on Earth to do it.

Africa

Africa is not a home to us, and we are not particularly welcome there. Few Garou are, really — only the Silent Striders have truly overcome the opposition offered by the local Fera, and even they are merely tolerated. We have no real wolf Kin there, and while a number of human regimes might interest us there are just too many Bastet, Mokolé, and other Fera calling the shots for us to truly get involved. This does not mean, however, that events in Africa cannot be turned to our advantage. A number of vampire sects rely heavily on African elements, particularly those related to the drug trade. You can use that information if you're careful, even if you never set foot on African soil. A number of other Garou groups — most notably the Black Furies, Silent Striders, and Glass Walkers — also have interests here, and so you would be well advised to keep abreast of current events on general principle.

Asia

Asia remains a land of fascinating opportunity for us, if we can navigate our way among three potent supernatural groups: vampires, the Beast Courts, and the Asian Glass Walkers. All have their own plans in motion here, and an ill-prepared Lord will be hard-pressed to keep his head above water if he runs afoul of Asian power factions. If he can, however, he'll find that the structure of the Beast Courts provides him with wonderful material for manipulation. You can make these people do just about anything, provided you can make it a point of honor for them to go along with your plans. Do your homework before coming here, though, because you'll be skinned alive if you don't.

Australia

What a ridiculous place. We have no business being there, and it has little to offer us in any event. There are Lords in the area, but there's not much for them to do. Leave it to the Mokolé and the souls of the Bunyip.

North America

Given its current role in world affairs, it is of course necessary that we maintain a strong presence in North America (and specifically the United States). We play the political spectrum as best we can, and use various commercial and corporate interests to support many of our efforts in Europe. It is not our homeland, though, and we tend to operate there out of necessity rather than preference. The combination of a stifling and

inefficient political system, the numerous and diverse interests which are difficult to control, and the strongest Silver Fang protectorate in the world make America a place we'd rather avoid if possible.

You would think that the politics of America would make it a place where Shadow Lords would thrive, but in fact the opposite is true. The ruthless politicking would be worth the trouble if the opponents were worth our time. Sadly, however, American politicians are so limp and uninspiring that we can't see the point of bothering with them. The place where we truly shine, that redeems America in Shadow Lord eyes, is corporate big business. This is traditionally Glass Walker turf, but it is also intensely political, and is thus a magnet for Shadow Lord politicians. We have alliances with the Glass Walkers in a number of larger cities, and we were made for the corporate arena. Between the bloodsuckers playing the corporate game, the Glass Walkers, and the various Bane-manipulated humans running around, it all makes for great sport.

Our greatest ally in North America is probably Eve Constantine, a Shadow Lord who wields considerable power in both the business and political arenas. She can squash news stories pretty much at will, and does what she can to make sure our activities in the States remain as clandestine as we'd like them to be. She's in the process of expanding her interests to Europe, to help support the Margrave's efforts, so she's definitely a Garou to watch.

Mexico

Since the colonization of the New World, we have always had a fair amount of influence in Mexico. Many of our tribe were lost here during the Second War of Rage, but some few still remain. They have taken the remnants of the Mexican wolf population and made them their own, and they maintain a few septs scattered throughout the northern parts of the region. One of the most interesting, and perhaps most disturbing, of these is the Sept of the Earth Mother. The leader of the sept, a Theurge named Miguel Gutierrez, has the dubious distinction of being the only Shadow Lord in recent memory to make contact with Bat, the fallen patron of the Camazotz tribe. Though once a powerful totem of Gaia, the destruction of Bat's children drove him to despair, and he fell to the Wyrm's embrace.

Gutierrez is a powerful Theurge, and seems to be particularly well connected to the spirits of his ancestors. Among these is the Lord who killed the last of the Camazotz, and it was this individual's guilt and remorse that led Gutierrez to seek out Bat in the first place. His efforts seem to have met with some measure of success, as he claims to have found a part of Bat that has not been fully corrupted by the Wyrm's taint. This is a claim most of us find to be patently absurd, but it is nonetheless difficult to deny the evidence Gutierrez presents to support his claims. His sept has taken Bat as its totem, and they benefit from a number of potent gifts granted by their patron. Further, Gutierrez now has a powerful connection to the spirits of the land around him, and can call upon them for information and aid. What's astonishing about this turn of events is that Gutierrez and his sept appear to be completely free of Wyrm taint, despite their connection to a recognized Wyrm totem. How this can be is anyone's guess, and it is a secret that we have not been able to decipher – and for his part, Gutierrez does not seem to be inclined to share. As Lords near and far learn of Gutierrez's story, they flock to his side hoping to learn from him. These so-called "Children of Bat" seek to subvert the Wyrm from within, putting past deeds to right and atoning for the sins of our ancestors.

Gutierrez's influence even extends beyond our tribe, and has attracted the attention of at least one sept of Get of Fenris a few miles away, across the Texas border. The Sept of the Earth Mother has worked closely with these Fenrir to destroy a number of oil interests along the Gulf of Mexico, using the voice of Bat in tandem with the battle prowess of the Fenrir to achieve impressive results. The Fenrir, in turn, occasionally come to Mexico to vent their rage on the vampires that infest the place. While the results so far are impressive, the future of such endeavors is unclear, and we are watching this sept very closely.

South America

South America is a battleground, and it's become a lot more interesting since Golgol Fangs-First opened up peace negotiations with the Bastet in the area. I wouldn't say they're making nice with us, but their kind and ours are becoming more and more interdependent, and that means the opportunities here are staggering. South America is also a waypoint for traffic coming into North America from Africa, which means many vampire plans cross through here. Between the Garou, the vampires, and the Balam there are many, many factions to play off against one another, all with the goal of curbing the Wyrm's influence in the region. We all have the same goal, and that means there are many opportunities for personal glory and consolidation of power if one plays his cards right. This place is a gold mine, so don't ignore it.

The Other Tribes

Mara sighs.

There are eleven other tribes in the Garou Nation, and an abundance of other shapeshifters and supernatural entities in the world. Any evaluation of these groups and individuals is a matter of personal taste, and so you would be wise to treat any estimation of their

worth accordingly. Speak with other Lords on the subject, that you might be better able to make your own judgments concerning these groups.

The Black Furies

It is easy to dismiss the Furies due to the rhetoric of their youth, but you would be foolish to do so. They harbor traditions steeped in mysticism, and that gives them ties to Gaia that we simply do not have. They can shed light on spiritual mysteries, and they're also extremely pro-active when it comes to defending the rights of the helpless. Their insight and fervor tend to produce favorable results, which reflects well on you if you point them in the right direction.

Alexandra: The Furies' rhetoric can prove to be quite tiring, but it does leave them open to manipulation by female Garou of other tribes. Since they also tend to be idealistic sorts, the merest word from a careful female Lord will send them scampering off on all sorts of fools' errands. They do hold grudges for quite awhile, though, so don't abuse this vulnerability unless you've been careful about covering your backside.

Roar-of-Storms: The Furies' sexual politics are ridiculous. They actually discard their male children, solely because they are male! It's a stupid practice, and one their lupus barely understand. It does work to our advantage, since we can often adopt the most promising male progeny, but it still makes them a tribe hobbled by the absurdities of homid thinking. I'm sure some Lords out there can use that, but I just find it pathetic.

Bone Gnawers

You know, I have always found it somewhat astonishing that so many Lords — indeed, so many Garou in general — think so poorly of these Garou. They are, of course, social outcasts, but that only enhances their utility in many respects. They see all that happens around them, and no one notices them as they scurry about their business. They are so eager to please, and so willing to talk to people who take the time to notice them and treat them like human beings — or even simple dogs. Call them mongrels if you will, but do not discount the wisdom they have to offer. More than one glorious agenda has hinged on the actions of one lowly Gnawer.

Pavel: Remember, too, that the Bone Gnawers have all sorts of interesting ties to other supernatural groups, particularly some castes of vampires and tribes of Ratkin. Both of these groups tend to be extremely well informed about the goings-on in the cities they inhabit, so this makes paying attention to the Bone Gnawers even more critical.

Children of Gaia

It is easy to write the Children off as foolish dreamers, largely because that's what most of them seem to be. Some, however, are surprisingly capable social engineers, and they can be useful go-betweens when negotiating agreements with other tribes. The others seem to view them as beings with good intentions, ineffectual methods, and a generally harmless demeanor. You should not ignore them, but do not expect much from them, either.

Pavel: Do not discount the Children's fighting ability. While they are uncharacteristically slow to anger, they are incredibly passionate Garou, especially when their packmates or those under their care are threatened. Indeed, under such circumstances they fight better than any Garou other than the Fenrir themselves.

Fianna

Fianna are of little use on the battlefield, but they are veritable fountains of information. They are also prone to drink, which makes them much more willing to part with said information than other knowledgeable Garou (such as Silent Striders) might be. Witty conversationalists, they are useful when one needs to create a relaxed atmosphere at a moot. They do have some unavoidable hang-ups, though, particularly about metis. Avoid them if such individuals figure heavily into your plans.

Pavel: The Fianna's reputation for partying aside, do be aware that they can be some of the most offensive bastards known to either man or beast. I have met several that make the Fenrir seem pragmatic and positively urbane, and as far as I can tell these are not the worst the tribe has to offer. The lupus don't seem to be as bad as the homids in this regard, and the metis tend to look on their homid relatives with embarrassment and shame. Use this to your advantage, as the metis in particular are often eager to drive their brethren into the ground (right where they belong, by my way of thinking).

Alexandra: Yes, their treatment of metis is disgraceful, and it does quite a bit to hobble the tribe. Still, the Fianna are strong traditionalists, and that quality can be used both to motivate them and as a source of leverage against the tribe. It makes them easier to manipulate than just about any other tribe.

Get of Fenris

They are fierce warriors, if a bit single-minded. Do not think them mere brutes — they can be surprisingly astute, and they are absolutely paranoid when it comes to dealing with other Garou, and us in particular. If you can gain their trust they are fierce allies, uncompromising warriors, and gloriously predictable. Some of them fancy themselves canny politicians, but this is a delusion. Be sure to indulge them, however, as they do not take insults lightly. Never, ever think of the Fenrir as mere shock troops — they are far too valuable for that. You must handle them with care, and use them spar-

ingly so that you might maintain their good will and keep your enemies off-balance.

Alexandra: I used to think the Get were all a bunch of misogynistic assholes, but I've since learned that they have no particular gripe against women — they treat *everyone* that way. Use the misunderstandings that surround the tribe to your advantage; they will often lend a sympathetic ear, and they are more likely to trust you if you appear to understand what the tribe's all about. There *is* a crude sort of nobility there, and I have to say that they do exhibit an unshakable dedication to Gaia and Her children. If you can remember that, your dealings with the tribe should go smoothly.

Roar-of-Storms: What matters about the Get is that they are fine warriors, and easily manipulated. They are also one of the more cosmopolitan tribes, and show up just about everywhere Garou exist. That makes them available, gullible, and effective, three fine traits in any tool. Just be sure to cover your tracks whenever you make them suffer — they do not take kindly to being manipulated, and they have a longer reach than you might think.

Glass Walkers

These Garou are absolutely essential if you plan to operate within the human sphere. The world belongs to humans now, and the Warders know how they work better than anyone. You can manipulate them, if you approach them with care. They are often so absorbed in human affairs that they lose track of events in the Nation, and that means you can finesse resources they control to fund your own projects. This can be a dangerous game, however, so be careful in how you approach them.

Roar-of-Storms: The difficulty with this tribe comes from the fact that they no longer understand what it means to be Garou. They have lost the wolf, and with it their teeth. While they can still be dangerous, they are essentially like humans in every major respect. The fact that they can still shift forms does nothing to change the fact that in their hearts they are more human than Garou.

Red Talons

The Red Talons will be of little use to you, I'm afraid. There just aren't enough of them in the world to accomplish much of anything. Regardless, they are childishly easy to manipulate, as they are easily fooled by even the most blatant lies. Be warned, however; while they are quick to trust — a lupus, that is — they do not take mockery lightly, and are fierce opponents once aroused.

Roar-of-Storms: You should not discard the Talons so quickly. They are the Garou closest to Gaia, and they are more in tune with the Wyld than any of us. They know the wilderness as the Bone Gnawers or Glass Walkers know the cities, and they make superb scouts when they are within their element. Further, they are fierce warriors, and experts at using the land around them to best advantage. If you face the Wyrm in such a setting, they are excellent allies to have at your side.

Silent Striders

Oh, if only we could make them talk... The Silent Striders are likely the only Garou in the world more clever than we are, and that's saying quite a bit. They see through all of our lies and schemes with pathetic ease, and you are a fool if you try to outwit one. However, if you speak plainly to them and make your needs known, they might agree with your goals — and in that case, they can prove to be quite helpful. Like the Children of Gaia, they are also great arbiters, and useful for resolving disputes among tribes.

Alexandra: Be sure to talk to a Strider before you travel to a new territory, as they tend to make great travel guides if you can get them to give you the time of day. Also remember that they know a thing or two about just about everything, meaning that at the very least they'll be able to tell you who to go to for more information.

Silver Fangs

The Silver Fangs' time has come and gone. You must continue to humor them, of course, but they are no longer your masters. They also are no longer quite functional, so do not involve them in your schemes unless it is absolutely necessary that you do so. Remember that they yet retain much power, and hence cannot be ignored; you must work around them without drawing their attention upon you.

Pavel: This is, of course, easier said than done, particularly in America. This is the Fangs' new homeland, and their power is quite strong there. If we are to make any headway in this country (and we must, since it has more economic and political power than any other country in the world) we must work with the Fangs, or at least not antagonize them. We can afford to be aggressive in our homeland, and even in Europe at large, but in America we must be much more cautious.

Roar-of-Storms: The fact that the Fangs are actually *accomplishing* things in America does much to advance their cause there, and indicates that we should support their schemes so long as it is productive to do so. Keep your own ambitions in check when dealing with them in this context, as undermining them not only makes you vulnerable but also hinders our fight against the Wyrm. That fight must take precedence over all other concerns, even the advancement of the tribe's interests.

Uktena

The Uktena traffic in secrets, but they are not the sort of secrets, which interest us. Be mindful of them, and give them a wide berth — if they are in the area, it is because they are up to something important. They tend not to be useful to us, so there is little point in trying to manipulate them.

Roar of Storms: The Uktena are most helpful in the wilderness, mainly in the Americas. They know where powerful Wyrm-spirits are bound within the Earth, and that can help you gain an advantage over the Wyrm's minions in those regions, or at least understand why they operate as they do. As with the Silent Striders, however, you must speak plainly to them, and never try to manipulate them. Politics is not their way, and a misstep with them will spell disaster — for you and the world.

Alexandra: I happen to like the Uktena I've met. They take a lot of flak for their so-called trafficking with Banes and willingness to value the clever approach over the glorious approach, but to me that says "kindred spirits." They think a lot like we do, only their political struggles happen in the spirit realm. Valuable allies, if you ask me.

Wendigo

The Wendigo are of no concern to us. They are bitter, hateful individuals who would rather wallow in their self-pity than actually do anything productive for the world. Additionally, they have next to no power or influence in either the human or the wolf worlds, and as such are of no value to us. Even the Red Talons have more to offer, as they at least understand the wolf better than any other tribe. The Wendigo don't even have that.

Roar-of-Storms: They are stupid and hateful, and do not act on their convictions. I do not even think they have convictions. The Uktena may be strange, but at least they work. The Wendigo just complain, and hack at those who come near them. Pitiful.

Pavel: I wish I could disagree, but my experiences have only reinforced this opinion. Just avoid the Wendigo if at all possible. Remember that they hold grudges for a long, *long* time, and that they have no interest in reconciliation or putting differences aside to accomplish more important goals. Do not cross them if you can avoid it, and avoid their territories unless you have some special reason to deal with them.

Alexandra: You're all forgetting that they're the chosen tribe of a spirit who's tied to the storm and wind almost as much as our own Grandfather. Great Wendigo could in fact be the younger, wilder brother of Grandfather Thunder, save that he substitutes anger for cunning. If the patronage of Falcon proves that the Silver Fangs are not yet completely hopeless, then the patronage of Great Wendigo should prove that his children still have strength and purity borrowed from the storm and the north wind. That might prove very, very useful in the time to come, if we could just get over the fact that they don't respond well to being manipulated in all our favorite ways.

The Fera

In addition to the other tribes, there are a variety of Fera in the world around us. Most have little to no influence in the world today, and those that do are rare enough that you'll likely never encounter them. It does pay to be informed, however, so here is what you can expect from them.

Ajaba

Official word says that the hyena-people are extinct, but rumors to the contrary continue to crop up. Their Kin are highly social creatures, so I suppose it's possible that Gaia originally intended for them to take on the role of the Garou in Africa. Weaklings that they were, however, they fell to the Wyrm, and were destroyed shortly thereafter. If some few remain, no matter; they aren't terribly important, unless they have some involvement in the Ahadi movement in Africa. That bears watching, but is not of primary importance to us.

Ananasi

These spider shifters can be found all over the world, but they keep to themselves and are not terribly useful tools. They seem to be disconnected from Gaia, and are very alien creatures. Avoid them if possible.

Roar-of-Storms: No! If you encounter one, you must destroy it. These creatures drink the blood of living things, just as vampires do! That makes them creatures of the Wyrm, no matter how they try to justify it. Destroy any you encounter, at once!

Alexandra: Though I don't feel as strongly about it as Roar-of-Storms does, I tend to agree. I suppose the Ananasi cull the humans in their own way, but they are far too alien to be of any use to us. We're better off without them.

Bastet

The Bastet have no influence in Europe, and precious little in the States. They are, however, a fairly potent force in the Amazon, so you should learn about them if you plan to influence events in that region. This is especially important in light of the concessions Golgol Fangs-First has granted them. They are also reasonably important in Africa, but again, that region is not terribly important to us.

Alexandra: It seems as though the Bastet are divided into tribes, as we are, and that some of these tribes are filled with especially potent warriors. They have managed to resist Garou attempts to claim their territory, and it is not in our best interests to fight with them. Be that as it may, they can be quite aggressive. Only the Silent Striders seem to be able to maintain a consistently productive relationship with them, so use these Garou as intermediaries if regions under Bastet control are important to you for some reason.

Corax

The Corax are our strongest non-Garou allies. They have lived with us in Europe for centuries, if not longer. They like to talk, and don't care much if the information is valuable; be careful, though, for they are clever and guileful beasts, and know all the tricks to make a dull mind talk. On the flip side, however, they often let slip valuable nuggets of information, often with no strings attached. Merely talking to one can prove enlightening, so do not pass up the opportunity if it presents itself.

Alexandra: The close ties that exist between our tribe and the Corax are not surprising, as it has always been the case that wolves and ravens share a special bond. Remember, too, that these are creatures of Helios, whereas we are creatures of Luna. That is an important distinction, for it means the Corax can be great allies in Umbral quests, assuming we can convince them that such activities will be entertaining enough to be worth their interest.

Roar-of-Storms: Bah! I don't care how useful the little beasts are! They dare to mock us, to nip at our tails, and to lead us on infernal chases all for their own amusement! Valuable or not, I say we fit the bastards for golden legbands and be done with them.

Gurahl

We've heard reports that Gurahl have recently surfaced in North America, but it's hard to picture them being of much importance at the present time. Certainly, finding one and gaining influence over it might net you renown, and in a broader sense they are quite important to Gaia; it would be well to see that they are protected if possible. It is inadvisable to play games with them, however, both because they have no real part to play in Garou affairs and because the backlash of a failed plan would be disastrous.

Roar-of-Storms: The Gurahl are staunch allies who take their role as Gaia's healers very seriously. They do not appreciate being manipulated, and they are wise enough to see through such schemes in any event. But if you need them, they will come.

Pavel: What? How do you know this, Roar-of-Storms?

Roar of Storms: If it bore mentioning, you would have heard the Galliards sing of it. Be silent and let Mara continue.

Mokolé

Mokolé are only of real interest in South America, and even there they tend to keep to themselves. They are theoretically the Memory of Gaia, but capitalizing on the possibilities this presents would require gaining their trust — an unlikely occurrence at best. Talk to a Theurge about them if they become important to you, but otherwise leave them alone.

Alexandra: Other tribes seem to have better luck with the Mokolé than we do. The Uktena in particular are good intermediaries, as they have strong septs in the American southeast, the Amazon basin, and Australia — all sites of significant Mokolé activity. Additionally, the Silent Striders seem to have reforged ties with the Mokolé in Africa, which is good for Gaia even if it's of little interest to us. These tribes are thus your best bet when it comes to dealing with the werecrocodiles. And do I need to reinforce the importance of dealing through intermediaries? I thought not.

Nagah

You... hear things, listening to the Stormcrows. You hear that the cobra-people are dead, but that they are not dead. You hear that they were beautiful dancers, and you hear that they are assassins who have a particular hatred of those who have transgressed against Gaia. I would think they'd get on well with the Judges of Doom, were any still alive. We presume that all of the Nagah are dead, and that's likely for the best. But just in case the Stormcrow gossip is true, if you discover one, do not antagonize it — rather, leave it be and let it continue to do its work. We need no more enemies, particularly those that can rise from the dead.

Nuwisha

The Nuwisha are also dead, or might as well be. The Stormcrows pass on stories of coyote spirits in the umbra, so perhaps they dwell there. Either way, they have little to offer us.

Alexandra: It is my understanding that the Nuwisha played the role of Gaia's Laughter, and as such they might be more important than our esteemed leader here lets on. Most have left the world for the deep Umbra, and that is where any role they have in the future of the world will be played out. They also have strong ties to Raven, so you need to keep them in mind if you are undertaking quests in the spirit world.

Ratkin

Like the Bone Gnawers, the Ratkin know quite a bit about the world around them. They are not quite as sociable, however, and are harder to manipulate. Use them if you can, but only if the opportunity just drops in your lap.

Roar-of-Storms: Hah! You forget, Mara, that the Ratkin are consummate survivors, and utterly devious. They hold fierce grudges against both Garou and vampires, and they have extensive contacts with both. They are wondrous sources of information, and ultimately disposable. They are ideal tools.

Alexandra: If you say so. Me, I say they're vermin, and deserve to be stepped on accordingly.

Pavel: I agree. Gaia created us to keep humanity in check, so the Ratkin must have served some other purpose, despite what the Gnawers say. What purpose was that? Well, if we don't know, then they can't have been dedicated to it, eh? Probably traitors to the Mother, every last one.

Rokea

The weresharks are quite possibly the most useless Fera on the planet. They are tied to the sea, not the Earth, and they are by all accounts quite alien. They are of no concern to you.

Alexandra: Agreed. Do note that they seem to have some presence in South Africa and Australia, so if you ever find yourself in these areas (though Gaia knows why you would) you should keep them in mind. They are not friendly, and might as well be Wyrm creatures for all the help they'll give us.

Stargazers

Ah, the wayward sons. They are nice and cryptic, and have a reputation for doing nothing (and doing it well). Their defection was no great loss.

Pavel: It is, however, significant. The Fera of the Far East are becoming important as we approach the End Times, and we cannot simply ignore them. Instead, it would be in our best interests to try to understand why the Stargazers left us, and what that means for the future. While this may not seem like a critical project, it nonetheless deserves our attention.

The Beast Courts

Strange beings, these "beasts." They are Fera enslaved to a particular human culture, and hence are a mystery to the rest of us. Our spiritual brothers, the Hakken, are part of this group, and they are as alien to us as any other shifter. Nonetheless, they are tremendously important when navigating the affairs of the East, and you would do well to learn of them should your travels take you to this region.

Alexandra: Also, with the advent of the Ahadi, the ties between Garou and other Fera are increasing in strength. The Beast Courts may be criticized for their reliance on human social norms, but it is nonetheless an interesting model showing how Fera interactions might be productive. The Ahadi seems to be built on the Beast Court model, and something similar may soon develop in South America. As such, it is very much in our interest to study and understand the Beast Courts' ways of doing things.

The Others

Gaia's children comprise only a fraction of the supernatural creatures populating the world. Most of the others are both dangerous and more numerous than we are, so you must exercise extreme caution when dealing with them. Do not assume they think like you do, or that they are motivated by the same sorts of goals. These are alien beings, and you must treat them accordingly.

Vampires

Vampires are our eternal foes, but we often paradoxically find ourselves making alliances with them more than any other supernatural group — including other Garou. It is of course true that we would happily see them scourged from the planet, and the Margrave does his level best to make this vision a reality, but in the meantime the Leeches are filled with information about all sorts of things we find important. They tell us what's going on in the various branches of Pentex, how things are going in the cities, and so on and so forth. They're also plentiful and disposable, so a good way to eliminate an enemy — or a hive of Wyrm taint — is to get a bunch of vampires mad at him. You eliminate your foe, and don't have to sacrifice Garou to do it. Everybody wins!

Roar-of-Storms laments: I have heard, on occasion, of Garou and vampires running together as allies, or even friends. This disgusts me. Use a vampire as a pawn if you must, but do not delude yourself into thinking such an abomination can ever be a lasting ally. They are *dead*. They are the antithesis of everything we represent, and to call one a friend is to mock Gaia in the worst way possible.

Mages

Mages are quite subtle, and in the right circumstances quite powerful. You don't want to make them

angry, but if you can get one in your pocket they can prove to be a terrific ace up your sleeve. You do have to treat them as equals, though, since they're filled with thoughts of "ascension" and other such nonsense. But if you approach them right, they'll eat out of your palm just like any other human will.

Roar-of-Storms: Bah! Your humanity is showing. Mages take the beauty of Gaia and crush it, forcing it to submit to their wills. There is no good to be found here, even in those who think themselves friends of the Earth. They are abominations, and must be treated in exactly the same manner as a nest of vampires or a hive of Wyrmspawn.

Wraiths

These beings hold secrets, and secrets hold power. It is typically not our way to truck with the dead, but they are a resource, which is easily exploited if you know what they seek, and how to get it. Often, the dead are put to rest by simple things, so it is worth our while to devote some time to learning about them when the opportunity presents itself. Still, the walking dead violate the natural order of things, so make laying them to rest your primary order of business should you encounter one.

Pavel agrees: I've encountered ghosts in a number of places, typically sites of horrific acts or great battles. They are somber creatures, and quite disturbing. Some, however, are extremely hostile, so exercise care when dealing with them.

Changelings

Their time is gone, it seems. We hear of them every now and then, but their influence on the waking world has diminished, and they have largely been forgotten. It is a sad thing, I suppose, but they are ultimately of no consequence to us.

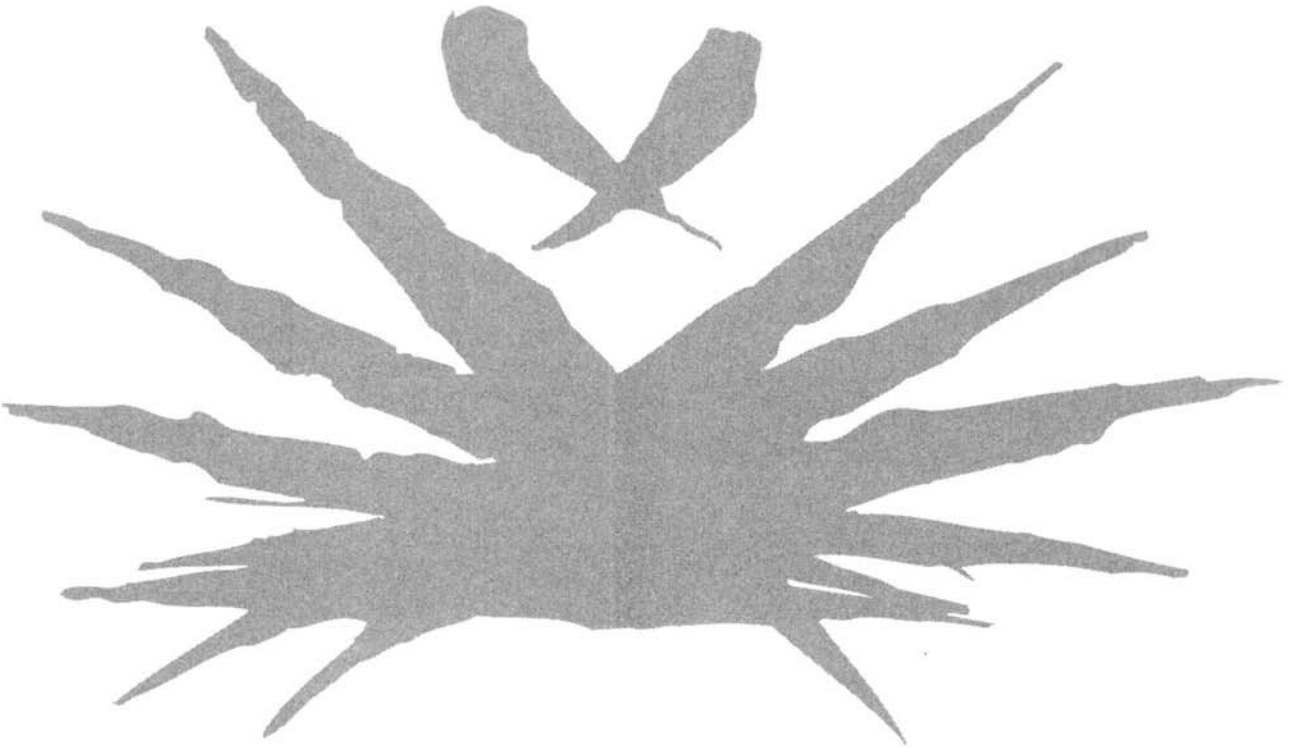
Alexandra wonders: I've never understood why it is they're here to begin with. What is their purpose? How could such bizarre and trivial creatures play into Gaia's plans for the world? I suppose we'll never know, given how rapidly they're dying from the world, but it is curious.

Hunters

You have to give the humans some credit — it only took them a few thousand years to get around to doing something about all the supernatural critters preying upon them. Now, they seem intent on getting payback and cleaning the world up, which isn't an entirely bad thing from our perspective. Unfortunately for them, they are clumsy, disorganized, and more often than not incompetent. They have no real community to speak of, no formal training to fall back on, and no coherent agenda. They just want to kill supernatural things — typically vampires. This makes them fantastic tools,

since they never know what to expect from us and are just looking for targets which often coincide with our own. So, a little push here, a little nudge there, and they do our work for us, all without us dirtying our hands or wasting other, more valuable resources on the job. Great opportunities, there, so long as we can keep their attention far away from us.

Roar-of-Storms snorts: I suppose that's true, but they're a pretty pathetic group regardless. They are uninformed, disorganized, misguided, and utterly ineffectual without aid from other sources. This makes them fine pawns, I suppose, but don't count on them for too much. And do watch your back around them — their pathological view of the things they don't understand makes them somewhat unpredictable.



BRAN SPENCER 02

Chapter Three: Thunder's Blessings

Am I a god? I see so clearly!
—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust*

Grandfather Thunder bestows a number of blessings on his children, all designed to propel the Shadow Lords to dominance among the Garou. The traditions of the Lords are their own, and any who think them mere politicians or schemers are in for a rude awakening. Shadow Lords are planners *par excellence*, and they move with a purpose lost on most other Garou.

Backgrounds

Backgrounds are arguably the most important traits a Shadow Lord possesses, for they define his access to resources and information as well as his ability to influence the world around him. While it's true that a number of Shadow Lord Gifts and rites are quite powerful, they are all highly personal in nature. Backgrounds, by contrast, involve the world around the character, sometimes to an enormous degree. Here are some ways to use the influence Backgrounds provide, as well as ways to make them unique.

Allies

It might seem rather odd at first that Shadow Lords find no use for allies, given the highly political nature of the tribe. Individuals in such a group would surely have great use for allies. However, the mercurial nature of Shadow Lord politics ensures that no allies will remain as such for long, and that no friend to a Lord can ever be fully trusted. Thus, Shadow Lords may not take this background. They may, however, choose to invest in Clout instead (described below), which is a more appropriate Background given the ruthless nature of Shadow Lord politics.

Ancestors

While not terribly interested in lineages and such, Shadow Lords nonetheless place great stock in gaining the favor of their ancestors. Ancestors bring with them knowledge and an awareness of the mistakes of the past, which living Garou can use to inform future decisions. More important, however, is the fact that ancestors represent a potentially powerful resource, one that most Lords are unwilling to overlook.

Clout

While Shadow Lords may never begin the game with ranks in the Allies background, they can begin with Clout. Clout is an important Trait, for it indicates both the degree of influence the Lord has within the tribe and the extent to which he can call upon that influence in times of need. Shadow Lords never work alone, and this is one reason why Clout is so important. It represents the Lord's ability to gather allies when making a risky political move, and the degree to which the Lord's words are respected when he is trying to sway others to his point of view. It is effectively a hybrid of Allies and the Influence Background found in other World of Darkness games, but it is both more flexible and more limited than either Background alone.

Clout is important to all Shadow Lords, as it affects their ability to influence the tribe at large and their ability to remain effective when working alone. Thus, even apolitical Lords often have some degree of Clout, as it gives them the power to break from the pack without losing Renown in the process. Of course, Clout works both ways, meaning that a Lord is expected to support those who have done favors for him in the past. This makes Clout useful in a story sense as well as in a character sense.

Contacts

Contacts are a Shadow Lord's meat and drink, for it is from them that they gain the information they use to turn ambition into reality. Generally speaking, there are two broad groups of contacts the character may make over the course of his career. Individuals in the first group are similar to allies, save for the fact that the character just doesn't have the time to invest in them as he would an ally. He thus maintains ties with them as best he can, and calls on them for information or a favor from time to time. These operate as normal contacts in all respects.

A less savory sort of contact is one that provides reliable information to the character, but is of no personal interest to him. Such individuals are little more than tools, and may be discarded when they no longer prove useful. The relationship between these contacts and the character is always strained, but it is nonetheless reliable. Contacts of this sort may include adversaries who share a common goal with the character, other supernatural entities, or even Wyrmspawn of various sorts. See the section on camps and Backgrounds, below, for ideas on using contacts in this fashion.

Fetish

Generally, Shadow Lords have comparatively little interest in fetishes, or at least in the more obvious ones such as Fang Daggers and Monkey Puzzles. Reliance on trinkets is considered a failing. However, any fetish favoring the Lord's affinity for guile and subterfuge will definitely get his attention. Further, while most Lords do not typically confront the Wyrm directly, many are nonetheless accomplished klaive duelists (largely because they

find themselves challenged on points of honor more often than they'd care to admit). Some also use fetishes for purely utilitarian purposes; a Bringer of Light, for instance, might find a Baneskin to be particularly useful, even if he has no interest in the fetish for its own sake. Similarly, Lords who often interact with Corax find that fetishes and talens of all sorts do much to loosen choice nuggets of information from their feathered allies.

Kinfolk

Shadow Lord Kin are human more often than not, but they do have a surprising number of wolves in their midst. These wolf Kin are spreading throughout Europe as that region's wolf populations recover from their near collapse, while the humans the Lords call their own continue to keep to themselves and provide a foundation the Lords may use to conduct their battles, no matter what form they may take. Whether wolf or human, Shadow Lords have close ties with their Kin, and tend to keep them close to the tribe. Ethnicity is of no real concern to the Lords; they have a penchant to breed with those humans who demonstrate the greatest personal acuity and strength of body or character, which has given them Kin groups of remarkable diversity.

Pure Breed

Shadow Lords have little interest in the breeding of their fellows, and Garou who have it gain little status within the tribe. All that concerns them is the intelligence and temerity of their fellows, and Garou who do not exhibit a preponderance of both cannot count on their breeding to assist them in Lord society. Shadow Lords with Pure Breed still receive bonus dice for their social roles, but it won't help them much unless they use it in conjunction with other skills. But for those who have it all... the only word for them is "magnificent."

Pure Bred Shadow Lords are often dark-haired and of stormy countenance in Homid form, with striking features and solid, wide-shouldered build. In wolf form, they are larger and deeper-chested than many wolves, a characteristic that is all the more imposing in Hispo form. The most notable quality of Shadow Lord Pure Breed, however, is a coat of darkest black in Crinos, Hispo and Lupus, often matched with bright, intense yellow eyes.

Resources

While many Shadow Lords would like to have high levels of Resources, the simple fact of the matter is that relatively few do. They and their Kin have historically dwelled in economically depressed regions, and the greed of their vampiric antagonists only exacerbates the problem. Those who escape, however, or who are descendants of those who do, manage to amass an impressive array of resources in relatively short order. It is not uncommon for Lords in the United States or other wealthy countries to funnel monies to allies in Shadow Lord strongholds in Eastern Europe.

Of course, most Lords rely heavily on their Kinfolk for monies, and it is here that their choosiness in the selection of mates bears fruit. Many Shadow Lord Kin are easily as clever and resourceful as their Garou brethren, and they use these wits to support those around them even in the leanest of times.

Rites

Despite its adaptability, or perhaps even because of it, Shadow Lord society is more structured than that of any other Garou tribe. This structure extends into the complicated dealings they have with the spirit world, and as a result, they seem to have a rite for every occasion. Most of these come from Grandfather Thunder and his brood, and most Lords are skilled in at least a small number of rudimentary rites. High-ranking Theurges are masters of the craft, and it contributes in no small measure to their success.

Totem

As a general rule of thumb, Shadow Lords tend to be fanatical about following Grandfather Thunder or one of his brood. Part of this is based on tradition, as sticking close to the tribe's totem helps maintain ties within the tribe which might otherwise be torn apart by internecine strife. But part of it is also the fact that most Gaian spirits simply cannot appreciate the Lords' sensibilities in the same way Grandfather and his brood can. Lords in multi-tribal packs don't try to spoil potential cooperation by insisting on a pack totem of Thunder's court, but packs and septs made up largely of Shadow Lords are on the average more exclusive.

Not all septs choose this path, however. Some invest in other totems as a way to curry favor with Garou from other packs and septs, and others do so to bring a totem's influence to an area, strengthening pack and totem alike. The Children of Bat, for example, have effectively restored at least a portion of Bat by virtue of their faith alone, and some Lords wonder if other fallen totems might be restored in a similar manner. While this is unlikely, it would not be the first time a Lord has undertaken such an unusual course of action.

Camps and Backgrounds

Members of various Shadow Lord camps and societies tend to focus their efforts in specific Backgrounds. These details are only typical, however, and should not be taken as concrete rules that govern the camps as a whole. Even within a camp, the important thing is what works — not what is "usual."

The Bringers of Light

The Bringers of Light test themselves by exposure to the horrors of the Wyrm, and as such their Backgrounds often reflect a fetish arsenal suited to achieving this goal. Many favor Baneskins, as these allow them to walk among the Wyrm's minions undetected without necessitating the use of a Gift. Similarly, more than one Lightbringer can count a fomor or a Black Spiral Dancer amongst his contacts, each using the other to gain a foothold in Wyrm society. Like all Lords, Lightbringers have no real allies or mentors to call upon. They do, however, tend to have considerable clout, if for no other reason than the fact that they have managed to survive things that would put other Lords down permanently. They tend to be loners, and have few Kin to call upon in times of need. Finally, the clandestine nature of their missions ensures that they rarely have a relationship with totem spirits, at least until their quest is completed. Their other Backgrounds are as varied as those of any Garou.

The Children of Crow

These betas tend to have enormous pools of contacts, as well as quite a few strong allies both within the tribe and a rare few associates among other groups of Fera (typically Corax). Since Shadow Lords cannot take the Allies background, however, these allies are typically represented using Merits (or rarely Clout, though it's uncommon for Garou so strongly inclined to play the role of betas to have any real influence within the tribe). Their Kin relations are also often strongly developed. The Children don't tend to have much in the way of rites or fetishes, as these things are often reserved for pack leaders. There is no real stereotype about the Children and Resources — some have quite a bit of tangible wealth that they use to get things done for their superiors, while others join the Children precisely because they have little enough resources to make a bid for alpha status themselves.

The Judges of Doom

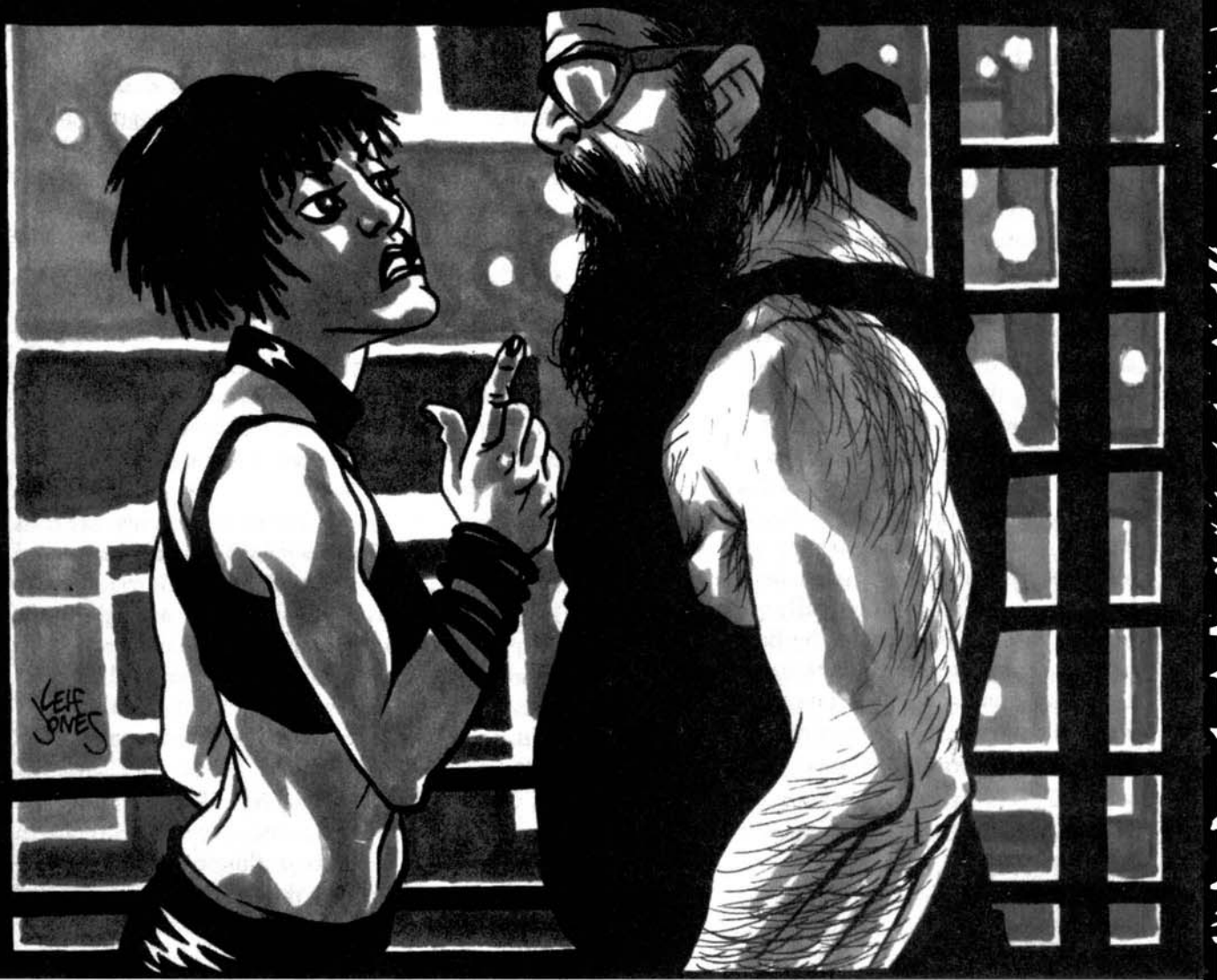
As with the Children of Crow, the Judges often have extensive networks of contacts and Kin to help them pass down their judgments. Their independence means they tend not to have strong allies, but their secrecy and need for versatile tools and weapons make a number of rites and fetishes quite attractive to them. They almost always have mentors, as these are the Judges who bring them into the fold to begin with. (These are, of course, represented using Merits of *Mentor* or *Feared Mentor* at the end of this chapter, not the usual Background.) Finally, the Judges' mysticism and close scrutiny of the Litany makes them favored children of Thunder, and he often acts as patron to them in ways that vary from individual to individual — personal totems are more common among the Judges than they are among many other Garou.

The Lords of the Summit

Lords of the Summit tend to have massive resources at their disposal, be they monetary, political or otherwise. They rely heavily on contacts to keep them informed of events in the world around them, and they are adept at manipulating Kin relations, both their own and those of other Garou. Many are accomplished klaive duelists, as they often find themselves surrounded by enemies eager to take their hides in a duel. They also tend to have many other fetishes at their disposal, for use as both gifts and as weapons against their rivals. Most importantly, they are often extremely skilled in the practice of rites, using them to crush their enemies and ensure their allies remain in power.

New Background

Shadow Lords are denied access to the Allies and Mentor background, as described above, but this does not mean they have no allies or teachers to speak of. Far from it. It merely reflects the fact that the Lords are manipulators, and cannot count on



aid from these sources for long. The following background is designed to address this issue, allowing Lords to interact with others in a way that guarantees them support but still exhibits the ephemeral nature of most Shadow Lord relationships.

Clout

"Look. It ain't my rule, hon," growled the heavy-set werewolf, his Glabro form exaggerating the impression of a seedy, hairy bouncer at a biker bar. "The Momma says no Shadow Lords get to enter less'n they're invited. You weren't invited. Now maybe you could beat the hell outta me and get past, but they ain't gonna listen to you if you got the blood of a Gnawer on your claws."

"I wouldn't have to fight you," said the dark-eyed woman in a low, slightly accented voice that made the sentry shiver. "I could pull rank on you, and force you to grant me entry. But I would rather ask you to give me an invitation, as a... favor to a friend."

His eyes widened, and he looked at her as if for the first time. "Yeah? Really? Well... uh... well, in that case, Miz Kliminski, maybe I could... ah, heck. Lemme call for someone to spell me, and I'll see what I can do."

You have influence within the tribe, and you can use this influence to occasionally gain favors or rally allies when making a push to accomplish a goal of value to the tribe. This Background both represents your ability to influence events within the tribe and your ability to sway others to your way of thinking, counting on their talents to bolster your own when staging a coup or trying to win support for your ideas at a moot. While the Background can be used to gain allies, the people gathered do not remain so for long and have no special affection for you. Rather, it happens that your goals and theirs coincide for the moment, and so they will support your while they find it convenient to do so.

For each level of Clout you possess, you may exert your influence one time per story. This may net you a nugget of information, or it may gain you an ally for one endeavor. The Storyteller determines how likely it is for any particular request to be granted; you can propose that you can wrangle a boon out of an elder, but the Storyteller may well decide it's more likely that you can draw on someone of your own Rank. You may use Clout to win favors from non-Shadow Lords as well, but the likelihood of doing so successfully (again, Storyteller's discretion) is further reduced. However, the downside to this is that Clout carries with it a cost: As you draw upon others for aid during the course of a story, they will also call upon you for aid in equal measure. Accordingly, each dot of Clout you possess leaves you open to a request for favors from others over the course of the story; you won't automatically receive as many requests as you have dots in the Background, but the possibility is there. Note that refusing to give a favor may damage your Clout, especially if the request is not entirely unreasonable.

- • One favor/ally per story
- •• Two favors/allies per story
- ••• Three favors/allies per story
- •••• Four favors/allies per story
- ••••• Five favors/allies per story

MET: This new Background allows you to exert your influence and "persuade" others to see your way of thinking. In return, you owe someone something for their assistance. It can best be thought of as a combination of *Allies* and Influence — you have people you can call on, but only if you do something to keep them on your side. This *quid pro quo* is expected. *Clout* can be used against non-Shadow Lords, but it works most effectively against Shadow Lords (particularly of your own Rank), Shadow Lord Kin and the local scene.

X	Can't get the time of day.
One Trait	One favor/ally
Two Traits	Two favors/allies
Three Traits	Three favors/allies
Four Traits	Four favors/allies
Five Traits	Five favors/allies

Gifts

Garou are social creatures, and Shadow Lords are far more social than most. How else could their society be so regimented, so orderly and disciplined, if the social interactions between Garou were not of vital importance to them? So it is that a Lord's Backgrounds and rites are much more significant to them than are their Gifts. Be that as it may, however, the Lords nonetheless have some potent Gifts at their disposal.

For most Lords, Gifts are a spiritual birthright, not the be-all, end-all of Garou existence. Though they are not trivial items by any means, the Lords value them more for their social and spiritual significance than for their potential as weapons as war. Typically, the Lords use Gifts to gain an edge over their opponents, or to maneuver around their enemies such that other, more telling blows may be used to finish the battle.

The spirits who teach the tribe's Gifts are thus much more concerned with issues of character and intent than they are with other Garou. Merely having the requisite renown is not enough, nor is simply performing the proper rituals. Lords who would learn their patrons' Gifts must show that they are fundamentally worthy of receiving the Gift, and that they will use it properly in all circumstances.

Shadow Lords may technically teach any Gift they possess to anyone who cares to learn it. In practice, however, this is almost never done. To them, this is like giving the petitioner a gun loaded with silver bullets — any Gift they teach may ultimately be used against them, and they figure that anyone who comes to them seeking the Gift couldn't get it from the usual source. Circumstances are, of course, the final arbiter of such decisions, but most Lords will respond to requests for instruction in a maddeningly predictable fashion: "If you want the damn Gift, go find the right spirit and learn it the same way I did!"

Tribal Gifts

These are common Gifts, and may be learned by any Shadow Lord who can convince a spirit to teach him.

• **Whisper Catching (Level One)** — Secrets are an important commodity, and those who strive to keep their secrets may very well be hiding something dangerous. This Gift was developed to root out potential traitors or plotters against the Garou, but has been open to... certain abuses ever since. The Shadow Lord may supernaturally eavesdrop on whispered conversations nearby, giving her an edge

over those with something to hide. This Gift is taught by a crow-spirit.

System: The player spends a Willpower point. For the duration of the scene, any whisper within earshot is as audible to the Shadow Lord as if the speaker were speaking loudly and clearly. The player may still have to make Perception checks to hear whispers within earshot if obstacles or distance would make even an ordinary conversation difficult to hear. The Murmur Rite (pg. 74) blocks this Gift; the Shadow Lords are not willing to violate the privacy of a shadow moot, even for their own personal gain.

MET: Spend a Willpower Trait. For the rest of the scene, the Shadow Lord may choose one whispered conversation to listen in on, which he can hear quite clearly. This is best done by having the player sit in the location out of play to listen. In a place such as a dance club, this will require Mental Challenges to interpret the sound around all the other distractions. This Gift has no effect on a place protected by the *Murmur Rite*. The Storyteller may choose to disallow this Gift due to logistical concerns.

• **Cold Voice of Reason (Level Two)** — Shadow Lords are skilled manipulators, and are renowned for their ability to both stall for time and talk their opponents into going about their business. This Gift gives that character trait supernatural force, holding assailants at bay while the Lord himself either escapes or calls on others for support. It must be used strategically to be effective, but it can be powerful when used in this fashion. This Gift is taught by a crow-spirit.

System: When the Lord is attacked in combat, or even merely threatened, the player may spend a Gnosis point and roll Manipulation + Subterfuge (difficulty 8) as a reflexive action. The Lord must be able to speak in a language his opponent can understand, although he needn't express concepts more difficult than "Are you sure you want to do that?" or the like. The attacker may not initiate hostile action against the Lord for one turn per success, provided the Lord and his allies do not, in turn, engage in hostilities against the attacker. If the victim is herself attacked, even by someone other than the Lord, the effects of the Gift end and she may resume her attack. A botch with this Gift drives the attacker into frenzy.

MET: If you are attacked in combat or threatened, you may spend a Gnosis Trait and make a Social Challenge (retest with *Subterfuge*). You must speak in a language your opponent can understand, but it need not be much more than "You're starting something you're going to regret...." For the next three turns, your attacker cannot initiate hostile actions against you, provided you and your allies don't initiate hostilities against your attacker. If your target is attacked by *anyone*, the effects wear off and he may resume his first course of action.

• **Icy Chill of Despair (Level Three)** — The Shadow Lord with this Gift can appear to grow larger and more imposing, becoming a terrible, shadowy version of herself. This change in aspect can severely intimidate any onlookers. A Stormcrow teaches this Gift.

System: The werewolf concentrates for a turn; the player spends one Gnosis and rolls Manipulation + Intimidation, difficulty 7. Anyone who means the Shadow Lord harm must make a Willpower check, difficulty 8, and score more successes than the Lord does in order to act normally. Failure means that the victims must spend Willpower to attack, take action against or even verbally oppose the Shadow Lord. This Gift doesn't give the Lord actual control over her intimidated victims — they're simply too spooked to actively oppose her.

MET: Spend one Gnosis Trait and make a Social Challenge (retest with *Intimidation*). With success, any who mean to do the Shadow Lord harm must succeed in a Willpower Challenge to act normally against her; those who fail must spend a Willpower Trait to do anything that would oppose her — attacking her physically, verbally sparring with her, calling on others to rally against her.

• **Raven's Wings (Level Three)** — A Lord with this gift is especially close to Raven, and may manifest a spirit avatar in the form of a raven to spy for him. The raven may see and hear, but may not affect the physical world or, in turn, be affected by attacks of any sort.

System: To activate the Gift, the Lord spends a Gnosis point and rolls Wits + Occult (difficulty 6). The raven may be sent up to five miles away for every success rolled, but is cancelled if it goes beyond this range. The Lord must concentrate to see through the raven's eyes, but need not do so to maintain the raven's existence. Although the raven is visible in the Penumbra, it cannot be seen in the physical world; by default it sees its Penumbral environment, but can peek across the

Gauntlet to the material world. The effects of the Gift last for a scene.

MET: Spend a Gnosis Trait and make a Mental Challenge (retest with Occult) to manifest a spirit avatar to spy for you. The raven can see and hear, and may travel up to five miles away from you. You must concentrate to see through the raven's eyes. The raven exists in the Penumbra and sees the Penumbral environment, but may peek into the material world. The spy lasts for one scene. This can be difficult to simulate in MET, and the Storyteller is within her rights to disallow it if the logistics are too much hassle.

• **Shadow Cutting (Level Three)** — One of the more cunning tactics of the Shadow Lords, this Gift allows a Lord to maim or kill her opponent by attacking the shadow he casts. This tactic makes her attacks difficult to dodge, and can provide a great advantage in situations where the shadow is a larger or more accessible target than the opponent himself. A night-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The werewolf must activate the Gift by spitting into her opponent's shadow and spending a Gnosis point. For the remainder of the scene, she may injure her opponent by striking his shadow. Only fetish weapons, silver or natural weaponry (claws and teeth) will work in conjunction with this Gift; firearms or other mundane measures cannot transmit damage across the spirit-link. The victim has two fewer dice to dodge attacks aimed at his shadow, and cannot parry such attacks at all. The Storyteller may even give the shadow's attacker extra dice in certain situations, such as during sunset or when the victim is a few stories up, but his shadow falls at the Garou's feet.

MET: Activate the Gift by spitting on your opponent's shadow (please don't actually spit — how gross!) and spending a Gnosis Trait. For the rest of the scene, you may injure your target by attacking his shadow. Only silver, teeth, claws and fetish-weapons will affect the target; firearms and mundane weapons like swords have no effect. Your target cannot parry attacks to his shadow and suffers a two-Trait penalty to dodges. The Storyteller may adjudicate other benefits or penalties, such as fighting during sunset or early morning when shadows are long or attempting the attack near noon. This Gift need not be performed outside — any shadow cast by any light will do.

• **Call the Storm (Level Four)** — As the Wendigo Gift: Invoke the Spirits of the Storm, save that only thunderstorms may be called and an avatar of Grandfather Thunder teaches it.

MET: As the Wendigo Gift, *Invoke the Spirits of the Storm* (see **Laws of the Wild**). Only thunderstorms may be called.

• **Seeds of Doubt (Level Four)** — Talented tricksters, Shadow Lords with this Gift may convince a listener of one false idea, no matter how absurd. The Gift only works if the lie told is not obviously harmful to the listener. It is taught by a Raven-spirit.

System: The Lord spends a point of Gnosis and makes an opposed Charisma + Subterfuge roll (difficulty 8) against the listener's Wits + Subterfuge (difficulty 8). If the Lord succeeds, the listener will believe the lie until somehow "deprogrammed." If he fails, however, the listener sees through the Lord's argument and recognizes the lie for what it is. If the Lord botches, the listener goes into frenzy (unless normally incapable of such, like a human).

MET: Spend a Gnosis Trait and make a Static Social Challenge (difficulty is the target's Wits-related Mental Traits and *Subterfuge* Ability). With success, the target believes one lie the Shadow Lord tells him, provided it is not directly harmful to the listener. Acceptable lies would be: "You've already seen my passport," "It was a Mokolé that killed your mother," "Mike is smart and funny." Unacceptable lies would be: "It won't hurt to stick your head in the oven," "These mushrooms aren't poisonous." The target will believe the lie until he is somehow convinced otherwise (direct evidence or even psychological deprogramming).

• **Wounding Lies (Level Five)** — For all their ability to prevaricate or misdirect when the need is there, few Shadow Lords — particularly elders — like being lied to. This Gift is the ultimate expression of that conceit; it forces those whom the Lord is interrogating to speak the truth or suffer the consequences. A person that lies to the elder suffers great wounds that mystically appear across his body with each untruth. A pain-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends one Gnosis and rolls Charisma + Intimidation (difficulty of target's Willpower). If he succeeds, the power takes effect; for

the rest of the scene, each fib the subject tells inflicts one level of aggravated damage on the subject, which cannot be soaked. Even half-truths open small, stinging wounds (no actual damage, but painful and obvious). A Garou targeted by this Gift may overcome the effect by spending a number of Gnosis points equal to the interrogator's successes. Most others usually begin telling the truth after the first wound or two (the Storyteller may call for a Willpower check, difficulty 8, to keep silent). Some Shadow Lords heighten the effect by claiming that silence will wound the target just as surely as lies will — an untruth on the Lord's behalf, but one that gets results.

MET: Spend a Gnosis and make a Static Social Challenge against a difficulty of the target's Willpower (retest with Intimidation). With success, your target's lies rebound on him — for the rest of the scene, each lie he tells inflicts a level of aggravated damage. Half-truths open small wounds but do not inflict levels of damage. The Storyteller may require the target to succeed a Willpower Challenge to keep silent in the face of such treatment. A Garou targeted by the Gift may overcome this effect by spending five Gnosis. Omissions (such as giving a description about someone's car by giving the color and model but not the make) are not detected.

Bringer of Light Gifts

These Gifts are poorly understood, and are not known to most Shadow Lords. Indeed, few high-ranking Theurges outside the Lords, and not many even within the tribe, even know of their existence. Hence, a Lightbringer must speak with another of this camp before he learns of these Gifts. Only then can he seek them out and discover their secrets.

• **Purify Scent (Level One)** — Masters of stealth, the Bringers of Light use this gift to mask their true identity from other Garou. Its effects apply to other supernaturals as well, but they are typically not interested in learning the information masked by the Gift. It is taught by a night-spirit.

System: The player spends a point of Gnosis and rolls Perception + Primal-Urge (difficulty 7). Each success raises the difficulty of discovering the Garou's breed, tribe, or auspice (by any means, natural or supernatural) by one, to a maximum of +3.

MET: Spend a Gnosis and make a Mental Challenge (retest with *Primal-Urge*). Success means the next attempt to learn your breed, tribe or auspice fails. Once the attempt fails, the Gift's effects end.

• **Pure Identity (Level Two)** — As Purify Scent allows the Lightbringer to mask his tribe, breed, and auspice, so this Gift allows her to mask her race. She may appear as a vampire or a changeling, or even as a hunter or a normal human. In shifted form, she may appear as a Black Spiral Dancer, and perhaps even as a fomor of some sort. This Gift is taught by a chameleon-spirit.

System: The Lightbringer spends three Gnosis, and remains masked for one full day. If scrutinized carefully, the Garou must make an opposed Manipulation + Subterfuge roll (difficulty 8) against the opponent's Perception + Subterfuge roll (difficulty 8) to maintain the deception.

MET: Spend three Gnosis to activate this Gift. If you fall under intense scrutiny make a Static Social Challenge (difficulty is the investigator's Wits-related Mental Traits and *Subterfuge* Ability). Failure reveals the imperfections in your disguise.

• **Wyrm Taint (Level Three)** — This exceedingly rare Gift can only be learned from Grandfather Thunder himself, and he is generally quite reluctant to teach it, given the possible side effects. In essence, the Gift allows the Lightbringer to call a bit of the Wyrm into himself, so that he might pass even the closest scrutiny deep within a Black Spiral Dancer hive. Excessive use of the Gift risks corrupting the user, such that only the bravest of Lightbringers even dare to learn it.

System: The Shadow Lord spends a Gnosis point and rolls Manipulation + Occult (difficulty 8). If successful, she appears for all intents and purposes to be Wyrm-tainted, and will appear as such to any Gifts or fetishes that detect such taint. If she fails, she may try again until successful (at the cost of one Gnosis per attempt). The effects last until the user chooses to dismiss them, which requires another Manipulation + Occult roll (difficulty 6). Failing this second roll indicates that a bit of taint remains, decreasing the difficulty of the activation roll for the Gift by one and increasing the difficulty to dismiss the taint by one. In addition, the number of successes needed to fall into

the Thrall of the Wyrm on a frenzy check is reduced by one.

If the Garou maintains this Gift for more than a day, the difficulties to activate or dismiss the Gift shift as described above, as though the Garou failed her check to dismiss the Gift. The difficulties continue to change until the Gift is successfully dismissed and a Rite of Cleansing is performed on the Garou. If the difficulty to dismiss the Gift ever rises above 10, the Wyrm-taint is permanent and may not be dismissed by a Rite of Cleansing, or by other means short of a trip to Erebus. In this case, the Garou is in serious danger of falling to the Wyrm.

MET: Spend a Gnosis Trait and make a Social Challenge (retest with Occult). With success, you appear to be Wyrm-tainted, and Gifts and fetishes that detect such will name you to be tainted. You may continue to attempt activating the Gift until you succeed, with each attempt costing one Gnosis. To dismiss the effect, you must make a second Social Challenge (retest with *Occult*). Failing this means testing again, at the cost of one Gnosis Trait per attempt. Failure to dismiss the effect successfully on the first attempt results in a bit of taint left behind. The taint left behind means only *one* lost Simple Test is enough for you to fall into Thrall of the Wyrm during your next frenzy check. If you maintain the Gift for more than a day, you begin to suffer penalties to your challenges to dismiss the Gift, gaining a one-Trait penalty per day after the first that you maintain the Gift. The threat of falling to the Thrall of the Wyrm will continue to follow you until you have successfully dismissed the Gift and undergone a *Rite of Cleansing*. If you allow the Gift's effects to remain until you have a five-Trait penalty or higher, the Wyrm-taint is permanent and it will take a trip to Erebus to fix you. If you haven't already gone the way of the Wyrm, you're well on your way.

• **Purity of Blood (Level Five)** — The Lightbringer's ability to resist the Wyrm is such that he may overcome the blood bond of vampires. This Gift is taught by an avatar of Grandfather Thunder, and has been responsible for the downfall of many a nest of vampires.

System: After spending 10 minutes in deep meditation, the Lightbringer spends two points of Gnosis and makes an Intelligence + Meditation roll (difficulty 8). Success indicates that the Garou may spend a Willpower point at any time during the following 24 hours to break the blood bond of a vampire, making the infiltration of vampire nests a trivial exercise. The Garou need only glance at the affected blood thrall; physical contact is not needed. The Gift works as well on Sabbat Vaulderie as it does on normal vampiric blood bonds.

MET: Spend 10 minutes in meditation, followed by spending two Gnosis Traits and making a Static Mental Challenge against eight Traits (retest with Meditation). With success, the Garou need only spend a Willpower Trait during the next 24 hours to break a vampiric blood bond. The target only needs to be within line of sight, and requires no physical contact. This Gift will also work on the Sabbat Vaulderie.

Children of Bat Gifts

These highly specialized Gifts are taught by members of Bat's brood, and may only be learned with permission from Bat himself. If a Lord actually joins this camp, this permission is implicit.

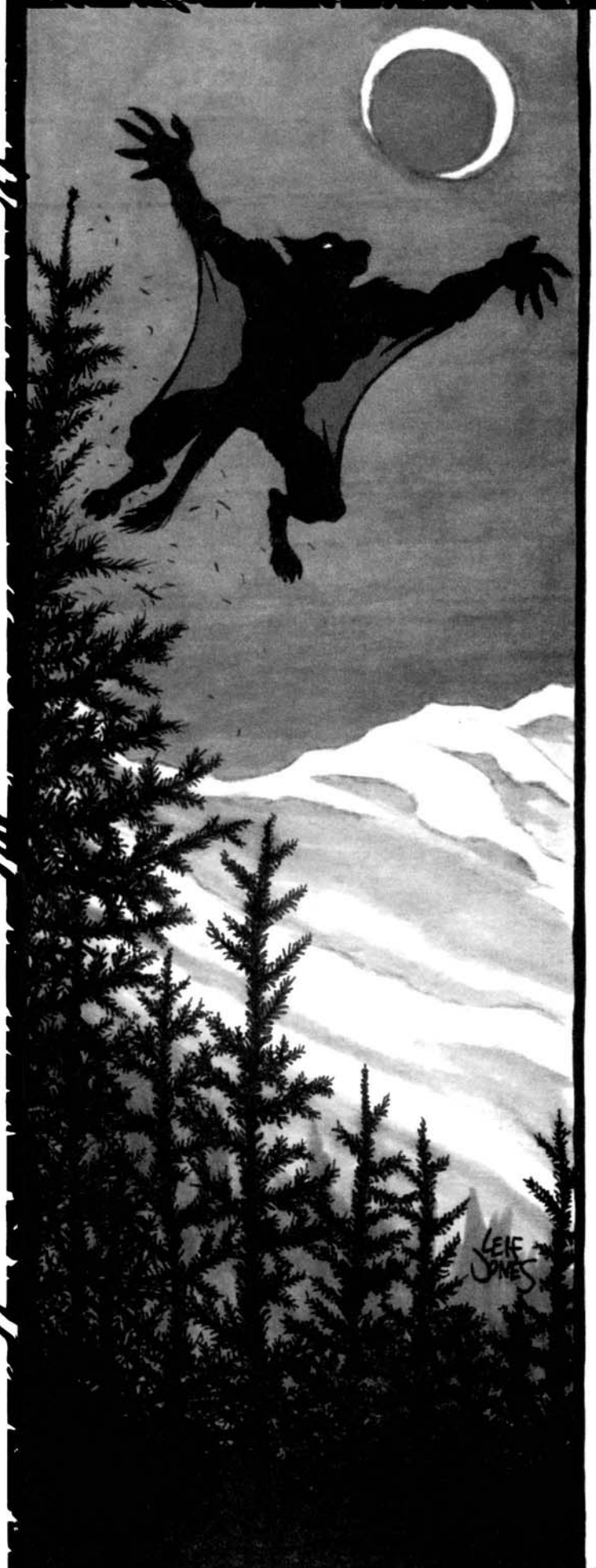
• **Ears of the Bat (Level One)** — As per the Black Spiral Dancer Gift, save that it is taught by an uncorrupted bat-spirit, and that the Shadow Lord's ears do not actually change form.

MET: This allows a Garou to act in complete darkness without penalty, as he uses sonar like a bat. It requires no special expenditures. A means of generating ultrasonic or extremely high-pitched sounds can confuse the Garou, negating the Gift.

• **Patagia (Level Two)** — As per the Black Spiral Dancer Gift. This Gift is taught by a bat-spirit, but it may also be learned from a flying squirrel-spirit.

MET: This Gift allows the Garou to produce large flaps of skin under her arms like a flying squirrel. The Garou may only glide, not fly like a bird, and her top speed is 25 mph. Once the Gift is taught, the membranes are always present, but they shrink into the Garou's arms and sides when not in use, becoming undetectable. To glide, the Garou stretches her arms and leaps from a height.

• **Song of the Earth Mother (Level Two)** — A more powerful version of Sense Wyrm, this gift allows the user to sense the presence of Wyrm activity within a broad area. Essentially, the Garou communes with the earth and listens to what it says. The Gift is taught by an earth-spirit.



System: The user spends 10 minutes communing with the earth, during which time she may take no other actions. She then spends three Gnosis and rolls Perception + Occult (difficulty 7). Success indicates that the earth tells her about any supernatural presence within an area of 100 meters per success. As with Sense Wyrm, this Gift does not offer specific information about the being or beings detected. It does, however, indicate whether or not the presence is Wyrm-tainted.

MET: Spend 10 minutes communing with the earth; no other actions may be taken, not even speech except to ask questions of the Narrator. After the communing, spend three Gnosis and make a Mental Challenge (retest with *Occult*). Success indicates the presence of supernatural creatures up to 100 yards away. While the Gift will tell if the presence is Wyrm-tainted, it will not give more specific information.

• **A Thousand Eyes (Level Three)** — The Child of Bat melds his consciousness with that of a swarm of bats, and may see and hear all that they see and hear for the duration of the night. Using this Gift requires a swarm of at least a thousand bats (easily found in most temperate or tropical areas). It is taught by a bat-spirit.

System: The Garou spends three Gnosis and rolls Perception + Primal Urge (difficulty 8). Success indicates she slips into a deep meditative trance, and can see through the bats' eyes and hear through their ears for one full night. With one success, she cannot control the bats' movements; they go where they will, and she sees and hears what they happen to see and hear (generally lots of insects). With three or more successes, however, the Garou can subtly direct the movements of the swarm such that they are guided to a general area of interest to the Garou. She still cannot control individual bats, but they will show mild interest in whatever area it is that the Garou wants them to see.

MET: Spend three Gnosis Traits and make a Mental Challenge (retest with Primal-Urge). With success, you slip into a trance and can see and hear through the senses of a swarm of bats for one night. You have no control over the bats, seeing and hearing only what they are interested in. By spending three additional Mental Traits, you can subtly direct where the bats go. You have no power over individual bats, and you need a swarm of at least 1000 bats in order to use the Gift.

Children of Crow Gifts

• **Perceptive Servant (Level One)** — Ever the loyal betas, Children of Crow make a career of fading into the background whenever anything important comes up — and then using the information thus learned to destroy anyone they care to. This Gift is taught by a Crow-spirit.

System: When eavesdropping on a conversation, noticing details of various sorts, or engaging in any other sort of information-gathering activity relying primarily on sight or sound (even scanning a nearby building with binoculars), a Child of Crow may spend a Gnosis point to reduce the difficulty of gleaning information from such activities by 2.

MET: Engage in some nefarious activity of gathering information using sight or hearing. While doing so, spend a Gnosis Trait. For the rest of your gathering time, you gain a two-Trait bonus for any challenges necessary for gathering information. You may not use this bonus to augment Gifts such as *Whisper Gathering*.

• **Hidden Secrets (Level Two)** — Children of Crow are terribly fond of blackmail, and this Gift does a lot to help their natural tendencies along. The Corax know this Gift as Dark Truths; the Shadow Lords learned the Gift from the raven-folk, and improved on it a bit. The Gift is taught by a fly-spirit.

System: To use this Gift, the character rolls Perception + Manipulation (difficulty 7). Success indicates the Garou learns one of the target's deepest and most embarrassing secrets. These secrets are of no use in combat, but make excellent blackmail material. Of course, not everyone has secrets of equal value.

MET: Make a Static Mental Challenge against seven Traits (retest with *Subterfuge*). With success, your target must reveal one of his most embarrassing secrets (e.g., she got a risqué tattoo when drunk, he sleeps with a teddy bear). The secret has no combat value, but the blackmail potential is great.

• **Dark Aerie (Level Three)** — As per the Uktena Gift Spirit of the Bird. The Child of Crow is enveloped in shadows while using this Gift,

making her easier to spot during the day but harder to spot at night. It is taught by a crow-spirit.

MET: As the Uktena Gift: *Spirit of the Bird* (see **Laws of the Wild**). The user is shrouded in shadow while using the Gift, making her nearly invisible at night but easier to spot during the day.

Judges of Doom Gifts

• **Interrogator (Level One)** — This Gift is used to terrify victims into confessing their crimes. It may be used only infrequently, but it is nonetheless a potent edge when used at moots and other gatherings of high-ranking Garou. The Gift is taught by a fear-spirit.

System: The player spends a Willpower point and rolls Manipulation + Subterfuge or Investigation (difficulty 8) versus an opposed Willpower roll (difficulty 8). If the Judge succeeds, the defender is paralyzed with fear and must confess the gravest crime she has committed in the last lunar cycle. The Gift may only be used once per target per lunar month.

MET: Spend a Willpower Trait and make a Static Social Challenge against a difficulty of the target's Willpower (retest with *Subterfuge* or *Investigation*). With success, the target must confess the gravest crime she has committed in the last lunar cycle out of terror of the Judge. She will not confess to things she has not done, and sometimes the gravest crime committed was sneaking from the cookie jar. Interrogator may only be used once per target per lunar month.

• **Executioner's Privilege (Level Two)** — As the Get of Fenris Gift: Halt the Coward's Flight.

MET: As the Get of Fenris' Gift: *Halt the Coward's Flight*; see **Laws of the Wild**.

• **True Fear (Level Two)** — As the Ahroun Gift.

MET: As the Ahroun Gift; see **Laws of the Wild**.

• **Assassin's Strike (Level Four)** — Like the Ratkin and the Nagah before them, the Judges of Doom have learned to quickly skip into and out of the Umbra so that they may surprise their prey. When using this Gift, the Judge disappears for a moment and reappears behind his victim, whereupon he may attack his victim with complete surprise. This Gift is taught by a cobra-spirit.

System: The character spends one Gnosis and one Rage, then uses the Umbra to "skip" up to 50 feet and reappear in the physical world directly behind his target. The Judge may then attack his victim at -2 difficulty (minimum 4). This attack may not be dodged unless the victim has bolstered his senses with supernatural aid.

MET: Spend one Gnosis and one Rage (this is one of the few times when you can), then step sideways. You may "skip" up to 50 feet to your target and reappear directly behind him. Your next attack will gain a two-Trait bonus. Unless your victim has supernaturally sharpened senses, he will not be aware of your presence until you attack.

• **Find the Transgressor (Level Five)** — With this potent Gift, the Judge calls upon the might of Gaia Herself to determine the exact location of any one named individual that has violated the Litany in some fashion. Use of this Gift is never a trivial undertaking, and those that abuse its power usually suffer dire consequences. An avatar of Gaia Herself teaches this Gift.

System: The user spends two Gnosis and two Willpower, then invokes the will of Gaia to help him find a Garou who has violated the Litany in a particularly foul fashion. If Gaia would agree with the Judge's assessment of the situation (which is left entirely to the Storyteller's judgment), he learns the exact location of his quarry. No method of obfuscation, be it supernatural or mundane, can keep the target hidden. The Gift does nothing to help the Judge reach the target, and it does not work on Wyrm-creatures (who are shrouded by their patron).

If Gaia disagrees with the Judge's opinion, or if the transgressor has violated the Litany in only a trivial sense, the Judge instead suffers one aggravated level of damage per Rank of the targeted Garou.

MET: Spend two Gnosis and two Willpower Traits, then invoke the will of Gaia to help you find the violator of the Litany. If Gaia agrees with the decision (and that's at the Storyteller's discretion), you learn the exact location of the target. Nothing can keep the target hidden, whether it's supernatural or mundane. You still have to physically hunt down your quarry; this won't bring you together. This Gift has no effect on Wyrm-creatures (the

Wyrm takes care of them). Should the violation be a trivial one, or if Gaia disagrees with the Judge, the Judge suffers one level of aggravated damage per Rank of the targeted one. Obviously, Judges tend to be very sure of themselves before they target high-ranking Garou.

Lords of the Summit Gifts

• **Interrogator (Level One)** — As the Level One Judges of Doom Gift.

MET: See the Judges of Doom Gift, above.

• **Paranoia (Level One)** — Lords of the Summit don't remain such for long unless they can see their enemies coming. This Gift gives the Lord a heightened sense of awareness, and also reveals a few details about the enemies he's about to face. A Stormcrow teaches this Gift.

System: The Lord rolls Perception + Awareness (Difficulty 7). A single success is all that's needed to determine the number of opponents in the area. Two reveals the type(s) of opponents, while three or more reveal progressively more detailed information. The effects of the Gift last for a scene.

MET: Make a Mental Challenge (retest with *Awareness*). Success reveals the number of opponents in the area. By spending further Mental Traits, you may learn more about your enemies (such as what kind they are, if they bring weapons, and so on).

• **True Fear (Level Two)** — As the Ahroun Gift.

MET: As the Ahroun Gift; see **Laws of the Wild**.

• **Roll Over (Level Four)** — As the Philodox Gift.

MET: As the Philodox Gift; see **Laws of the Wild**.

Rites

Intensely social, Shadow Lords focus on rites even more than do most other Garou tribes. It seems they have a rite or a ritual for nearly everything they do, at least in the older septs. Many of the newer ones, particularly those in the New World, are less concerned with rites and traditions than their elders back home are.

Shadow Lords are obsessed with keeping their rites secret, more out of principle than any real pragmatism. The rites given below tend to be mostly useless for Garou not of the tribe, but the Lords don't much care; these are secrets of great import, and they will kill anyone who shares those secrets, no matter the circumstances.

Caern Rites

Murmur Rite

Level Two

Developed by the Lords of the Summit, this rite is one of the many ways Shadow Lords keep their activities a secret. A Lord needs to know the Murmur Rite if he plans on leading a Shadow Moot, since it is used to open the moot and keep the discussions therein private. Though normally used to mask the conversations of many werewolves, this rite can be performed with as few as two Garou.

System: Each of the Garou taking part in the rite contributes one Gnosis at the ritemaster's prompting. Once the Gnosis is collected, the conversations of all of the rite's participants are masked for the duration of the scene. Any Gifts, technology, or supernatural abilities that allow an individual to eavesdrop on private discussions automatically fail. If the eavesdropper botches whatever roll she was using to try to listen in, she actually gains some piece of misinformation that serves to mask further the activities of the rite's participants.

MET: The participating Garou each contribute one Gnosis at the ritemaster's direction. Once the Gnosis is collected, the ritual masks any conversations the participants have. No Gifts, technology or supernatural abilities can pierce this, and they fail if attempted. At Storyteller discretion, the nosy Garou trying to eavesdrop might gain a piece of misinformation.

Thunder's Blessing

Level Three

This rite is used to draw Grandfather Thunder's favor upon a particular caern, investing it with a portion of his great power. In addition to bolstering the Gnosis of Shadow Lords who visit the caern, the rite also allows those affiliated with the caern to call down bolts of lightning upon their enemies, so long as they are within the confines of the caern.

System: Performed during a raging storm, this rite requires an extended roll of Charisma + Rituals (difficulty 8). The ritemaster must accumulate 10

successes to successfully complete the rite, and may attempt this roll only once per 15 minutes (though for every three Garou beyond the minimum required to complete the rite, the difficulty is reduced by one). If the rite is not completed in one hour, it fails, and the thunderclouds above send down bolts of lightning to punish the offending Garou (inflicting five levels of aggravated damage). If the rite is successful, however, the Garou performing the rite must give up 25 points of temporary Gnosis. Once they do so, a bit of Grandfather Thunder lingers around the caern, granting an additional point of Gnosis to all Shadow Lords so long as they remain within the caern's boundaries.

MET: This rite must be performed during a raging storm. The ritemaster must make a Static Social Challenge against eight Traits (retest with *Rituals*), but every three Garou beyond those necessary to assist the rite will lower the difficulty by one. The ritemaster must make three successful challenges for the rite to succeed; failure means an irritated Grandfather Thunder punishes the Garou with lightning bolts (these inflict five levels of aggravated damage). With success, though, the Garou give up 25 temporary Gnosis to the caern and Grandfather. Once this is done, a bit of Grandfather remains around the caern, granting one additional Gnosis to all Shadow Lords as long as they are within the caern's boundaries.

Mystic Rites

Communion with the Storm

Level Two

It is easy to lose oneself in the intricacies of Garou society, and to forget that the ultimate goal of all the politicking of the Shadow Lords is the defeat of the Wyrm and the restoration of Gaia to her normal state. Many Shadow Lords thus turn to this rite to remind themselves of why they're fighting, and of what it is that they're supposed to be fighting for. In the process, they focus their Rage and their ambition so that they may more effectively accomplish their tasks.

This rite is always performed in the midst of a heavy thunderstorm, but that is its only constant. It may be performed singly or in groups, at any time of day or night, and in any part of the world. So long as Grandfather Thunder's touch is present, that is all that matters.

System: Standard roll. While this rite is in effect, all Enigmas rolls have difficulties three lower than normal (minimum 4). In addition, the ritemaster may bring any single problem (usually nominated beforehand) to the attention of Grandfather Thunder in an attempt to seek his counsel. If he is invoked with a successful Wits + Enigmas roll (difficulty 8), Grandfather Thunder presents them with an appropriate course of action and girds their resolve with either a point of Rage or a point of Gnosis, depending on the nature of the problem.

MET: Make a standard rites challenge. While the rite is occurring, *Enigmas* challenges receive a single free retest (the second result stands, regardless of whether it improves the original results). The ritemaster may also attempt to bring a single matter before Grandfather Thunder (after a successful invocation and a Static Mental Challenge against eight Traits, retest with *Enigmas*). If successfully invoked, Grandfather Thunder presents them with a course of action and bolsters their resolve by granting either a Rage Trait or a Gnosis Trait to all participants.

Rite of the Hurricane

Level Five

Used almost exclusively by the Shadow Lords of Mexico, this rite is a more potent version of the punishment rite Calling the Storm. Whereas that rite is used to rebel against a corrupt or unjust leader, this rite is designed to focus the fury of the Garou into a powerful storm, which may then be used to shatter the grip of the Wyrm upon the land. It is used to destroy nests of vampires, to sweep oil refineries out to sea, and to attack other artificial structures throughout the storm's area. Most Garou frown on using this rite in all but the direst emergencies, for it is quite destructive to the land it scours clean. The counter-argument is that Gaia is resilient, and it is better to let Her heal Her wounds than suffer in the coils of the Wyrm. Even so, the questions raised by the rite ensure that the Rite of the Hurricane remains a last resort, to be used only when the need is dire.

System: This rite may only be performed in a tropical area, and even then only during the storm season. If these conditions are met, a single day is enough to call up a storm cell in the general region. Manifesting hurricane-force winds for a single scene

is easily done, but maintaining the storm is another matter. Doing so requires the expenditure of three points of Gnosis per day, which may be paid by any number of willing participants. Once the cost is not paid, the storm dissipates normally.

MET: Provided the conditions are right, a single day of working the ritual calls up a storm cell in the region. Three Gnosis per day are required to maintain the storm; anyone may pay this cost. The storm dissipates when it is no longer supported with Gnosis. Additional thunderstorms may spawn naturally from hurricanes at the Storyteller's discretion. The ritemaster has no control over these.

Rite of Punishment

Calling the Storm

Level Three

Given the rigors of Shadow Lord society and emphasis on goals, it is inevitable that some become corrupt and put their own selfish desires over the good of the tribe. This rite was developed to counter fallen Lords with Shadow Lord justice. When a leader within the tribe has fallen to the Wyrm, the Garou ruled by him may use an outside agent to announce his transgressions to the tribe at large. If the accusations are true, the Garou may enact this rite. Stormclouds gather above the moot, and the Garou invoking the rite gain the strength they need to destroy the one who has turned his back on Gaia.

System: If the charges leveled against the corrupt Garou are true, the storm that gathers above the moot empowers those who conspire against him. They gain two points of Rage, and if they are Shadow Lords they also gain a point of Gnosis. In addition, Primal-Urge rolls are made at a difficulty two lower than normal. If the charges are untrue, however, the gathering storm punishes the offenders, striking them with lightning that deals five health levels of aggravated damage.

MET: If the charges are true, the storm empowers those who array against the corrupt one, and they gain two Rage Traits. If any are Shadow Lords, they also gain a Gnosis Trait. All against the corrupt one gain two temporary levels of *Primal-Urge*, which can be used normally for retests. Grandfather Thunder does not punish without cause, though. If the charges are false, the storm punishes the accusers by striking them with lightning that inflicts five levels of aggravated damage. Any bonuses granted dissipate when the target has been dealt with.

Rites of Renown

Rites of Renown are extremely important to the Shadow Lords, perhaps moreso than any other aspect of Garou life. Lord society is often regimented and intensely hierarchical, and any time a Garou shifts position in that society he or she must undergo a rite to do so. Most such rites are minor variations of the standard Rites of Renown, having a myriad of different social functions but being otherwise identical. The Lords have a number of unique rites, however, and these are described below.

Rite of Dominance

Level Two

No matter how true they remain to the ideals of Gaia, Shadow Lords still live in a society where dominance over others is the rule instead of the exception. A Lord uses this rite when she has ousted a corrupt leader, or when she has dominated those beneath her and forced them to submit to her will. By coercing them into taking part in this rite, she ensures that their loyalty to her is strong and that they will be loath to work against her in the future.

System: During the course of this rite, all participating Garou except the ritemaster lose one permanent Willpower, which are given to the totem of the pack for safekeeping. So long as the pack members remain obedient to the ritemaster (who must be the pack's alpha), they may use the lost Willpower normally. Should they ever act against her, however, they will lose the Willpower permanently. The effects of this rite can be undone using a variety of punishment rites, presupposing the ritemaster has acted inappropriately or abused her position as pack alpha.

MET: During the rite, all participants except the ritemaster lose one *permanent* Willpower, which goes to the pack totem. Should the pack members act against the ritemaster (who must be the pack alpha), they will lose the Willpower. If they remain loyal to her, they may use the Willpower normally. Punishment rites can undo this, particularly if the pack alpha has abused her position.

Rite of Conquest

Level Five

More celebratory than it might seem from the name, the Rite of Conquest is performed to welcome back a Bringer of Light who has successfully

endured an extended stay in the presence of the Wyrm (and emerged unscathed, both physically and spiritually). It is similar in many respects to a Rite of Cleansing, but it is far more powerful. Recipients of this rite are true paragons among the Garou, and even Garou of other tribes bow down before them in respect, as they have accomplished things few others would even dare to attempt. This rite may only be performed by one who has himself received the rite, and it is only performed under a sky filled with storm clouds, under Grandfather Thunder's watchful gaze.

System: To receive this rite, a Shadow Lord — typically a Bringer of Light — must endure the horrors of the Wyrm for a period of no less than six months. He must interact with fomori, Banes, or corrupted Garou during this period, and he must successfully resist their influence without falling to the Wyrm, or even being tainted by its presence. If the Garou survives such an ordeal, he may receive this rite and be recognized as one of the strongest of Gaia's warriors. Truly, he has conquered the Wyrm.

The Garou performing this rite, who must be a Theurge, expends a number of Gnosis points equal to the recipient Garou's rank. The recipient pours forth all of his Gnosis points, giving them up to the storms above him. Once this is done, the ritemaster makes a Charisma + Rituals roll (difficulty 10 - the target Garou's Rank) and draws the power of Gaia into the recipient's body. On receiving the rite, the recipient gains one of several possible benefits (player's choice). Possible benefits are as follows:

• The recipient becomes highly resistant to the thrall of the Wyrm. He must roll eight or more successes on a Rage roll to enter a frenzy, and 10 or more successes to enter the Thrall of the Wyrm. Further, the character may spend a Willpower point to halt the frenzy normally, even if he would normally fall into the Thrall of the Wyrm.

• The Lightbringer becomes highly resistant to Wyrm toxins. He receives no penalty from supernatural radiation, balefire, Wyrm elementals, and the like (although he does still suffer damage from such attacks). He is likewise immune to Bane possession.

• The character is immune to Harano.

• The character's sanity is absolute. He becomes immune to any and all circumstances that might inflict him with temporary or permanent insanity, and will maintain his sanity even if forced to dance the Black Spiral (although he is not protected from any other aspect of this gruesome ritual).

MET: Only a Theurge who has received this rite himself may perform this ritual. The character must first endure six months of close contact with the Wyrm, interacting with fomori, Banes and Black Spirals and other Wyrm-corrupted shifters, and resisting taint and temptation. If he is still strong at the end of six months, he may receive this ritual. Under a stormy sky, the Theurge expends a number of Gnosis Traits equal to the recipient's rank. The recipient then offers up *all* his Gnosis to the storms. With the offering made, the Theurge makes a Static Social Challenge with the difficulty being 10 minus the target's Rank (retest with *Rituals*). With success, the recipient receives the power of Gaia into himself and receives one of several possible benefits (player's choice, Storyteller's approval). Below are just a few possibilities:

The character enjoys a high resistance to Wyrm toxins, such as supernatural radiation, Wyrm elementals, balefire and similar substances. He will suffer damage from them, but not take penalties due to simple exposure. He cannot be possessed by Banes.

The character becomes immune to Harano.

The character's sanity becomes ironclad. Circumstances that might inflict derangements (temporary or permanent) will not affect him, and he can maintain sanity even if forced to dance the Spiral (this is not necessarily a mercy when one considers the other aspects of the ritual).

Totems

Most Shadow Lords refuse to follow totems they do not respect; it takes a very open-minded Lord to agree to follow a totem like Unicorn (whose penchant of favoring mercy to pragmatism is well-known) or Stag (it is considered galling to bow to a prey animal). Grandfather Thunder is the patron of most Shadow Lord packs, but a few others are notable for earning favor among the Lords. Of the following, Crow and Typhon are considered members of Grandfather Thunder's spirit brood; Bat is an outsider, but is closer to the Shadow Lords than to any other tribe.

Totems of War

Crow

Background Cost: 2

Followers of Crow are, first and foremost, survivors. This does not mean they are selfish or unconcerned with the affairs of others, however. Quite the contrary — Crow's followers take a keen interest in the world around them, and many of them are the humblest and most self-effacing Shadow Lords in existence. Crows make poor warriors, but they are intensely observant and quite loyal. They do not take betrayal lightly, however, and will go to remarkable lengths to gain revenge in whatever fashion they see fit.

Traits: Packs of Crow gain two points in Alertness and Subterfuge and one point in Etiquette.

Ban: Crow asks that his children remain loyal to those they serve. He does not expect this from children whose leaders treat them poorly, however, or whose leaders are corrupt. In these instances, Crow asks his children to find a way to remove those leaders from power, and to replace them with others who are worthy of his children's respect. If this is not possible, Crow never punishes loyalty.

MET: Crow's children gain two levels of *Subterfuge*, a level of *Etiquette* and the Mental Traits *Alert* x 2.

Typhon

Background Cost: 5

Typhon is a raging storm-spirit, the dragon that spits thunder and lightning. He is one of the more violent aspects of Grandfather Thunder, and his children reflect his tendency toward violence. They are aggressive and furious, just like their totem. Most Garou look on Typhon as a mixed blessing; he grants prodigious ability in battle, but he also makes his children thoughtless and temperamental.

Traits: Packs dedicated to Typhon may share three additional points of Brawl. Each pack member also receives three temporary Rage points per story. Typhon's children gain two temporary Glory but lose two temporary Wisdom.

Ban: Typhon demands that his children never pass up a fight with a worthy foe. He also expects his children to spend time communing with storms.

MET: Typhon's children gain three levels of Brawl to share. Each pack member also gains three temporary Rage per story. They gain two temporary Glory upon joining with Typhon but lose two temporary Wisdom at the same time. Rumors that some vampires revere Typhon occasionally reach his children's ears, but these are generally dismissed as the misunderstandings of the dangerously confused.

Totem of Wisdom

Bat

Background Cost: 5

Bat is an unusual totem, and a rare choice — as far as most Garou know, he has fallen entirely into the thrall of the Wyrm. Until recently, this was a very accurate summation; the fall of the Camazotz centuries ago destroyed Bat's sanity, and in his hatred he turned against Gaia so that he could help to destroy the Garou who drove his children to extinction. Recent events in Mexico, however, have partially redeemed Bat, or at least a portion of him. Like the deity revered by the Mayan cultures so long ago, Bat now appears to have a dual aspect — in some respects he is still of the Wyrm, but in others he has come back to Gaia. Most Garou don't know what to make of this, and look on Bat's followers with great suspicion. None seem to be corrupt, but that doesn't make them innocent.

For their part, Bat's children have deep ties to the earth unmatched by those of other Garou. They listen to the voices of the Camazotz, and are making a sincere effort to continue that lost Breed's work. The voice of Gaia sings through them, and they listen to Her voice so that they can find Her enemies and destroy them.

Traits: Bat's children gain three dots of Enigmas, and each may use the Gift: Ears of the Bat once per day for the duration of a scene. Each pack member's Perception increases by one permanently, even if this would raise the rating above 5. Pack members also gain two points of Wisdom.

Garou with this totem are well regarded by many Fera, particularly those in Central and South America. However, Garou look upon Bat and his children with suspicion, meaning that all pack members lose five points of temporary Honor (if they have that many) and subtract one from any temporary Honor Renown awards they receive. The pack members must work harder to prove that they are honorable.

Ban: Bat demands that his children never fight with Gaia's other children — including other Gaian Garou. Even ritualized or honorable combat is forbidden. His followers simply need to find other ways to resolve disputes.

MET: Bat's children gain *Enigmas* x 3 and may use the Gift: *Ears of the Bat* once per day for one scene. Each gains the Mental Trait: *Observant* and two Wisdom. Because Garou still believe that Bat is of the Wyrm, any who follow him lose five temporary Honor and subtract one from any Honor Renown awards given them.

Fetishes

Judge's Dagger

Level 2, Gnosis 4

These jet-black blades are used exclusively by the Judges of Doom. They are feared weapons, and with good reason — many a target has fallen to a single strike from such a blade. Before they can be useful, however, they must first be attuned to a target. Two things are required before this may happen. First, the target must be guilty of violating the Litany in some fashion. The specifics are not important, but the dagger works much more effectively if the transgression is a serious one. Equally important is the need for an item of significance to the target or (preferably) his blood. If the target is guilty and the item is available, the dagger may be properly attuned.

To attune the blade, the wielder must make a Charisma + Rituals check (difficulty 7) and invest a number of Gnosis points in the dagger equal to the target's Rank. (Those without Rank are exempt from the law of Litany, of course, although Black Spiral Dancers may still be targeted — they are, after all, criminals against Gaia.) This Gnosis remains in the dagger until the victim is slain, and may not be recovered until that time. Once the dagger is attuned, however, the wielder may learn the direction of the target relative to herself simply by placing the dagger in a pool of water. Any pool will do — some Judges have even used rainpuddles. If there's room for the dagger to move, it will unerringly point out the target's location (assuming the victim isn't using Gifts or other supernatural powers to mask his true location).

Once the Judge has found the target, the second benefit of attunement becomes apparent. Any successful strike by the dagger inflicts a number of levels of aggravated damage equal to the number of Gnosis points stored within it, in addition to normal dagger damage. Only the intended target may be damaged in this fashion — the target's allies are not affected. Once the target has been eliminated, the wielder's Gnosis returns to her and the dagger may be attuned to a new target. To create a Judge's Dagger, a spirit of vengeance or retribution must be bound within the weapon.

MET: The dagger must be attuned to the target, first by determining that the target is guilty of violating the Litany and then by acquiring something personal of the target, preferably blood but anything personally significant to the target will do. Make a Static Social Challenge against seven Traits (retest with *Rituals*) and invest the dagger with the same amount of Gnosis as the target's Rank. Cubs without Rank are considered exempt from the law of the Litany, not to mention some find it rather crass that a Judge is hunting a mere cub. In the case of something without Rank (such as a human, a vampire or other supernatural creature), the Storyteller may decree that no Gnosis is necessary or some taken expenditure is required to put weight behind the task. No more than six Gnosis may be added to the dagger. Any Gnosis spent remains in the dagger until the victim is slain. The attuned dagger may be placed in a pool of water big enough for the dagger to turn, and it will point in the direction of the target. The target can mask his location by using Gifts or supernatural means. Any successful strike using the dagger inflicts levels of aggravated damage equal to the amount of Gnosis stored in it, in additional to the normal lethal damage the dagger itself inflicts. Only the attuned target may be slain in this fashion. Once the target is slain, the Gnosis returns and the dagger may be attuned again.

Assassin's Klaive

Level 5, Gnosis 5

The weapon of choice for Theurges who need to see a rival eliminated, these bone-colored blades are also used to quickly and quietly destroy those that prove to be difficult to attack directly. Sleek and deadly, assassin's klaives are easily hidden underneath clothing, and are quite innocuous if observers don't know what to look for.

The snake-spirit within the klaive allows the possessor to expend a point of Gnosis to activate one of the following abilities: surround himself with an aura of absolute silence for a scene, mask his scent for one hour, or eradicate his footprints while he walks for one day. The blade is not actually silver, but inflicts the wielder's Strength in aggravated damage, and the difficulty to soak wounds from an assassin's klaive is raised by 1.

MET: The spirit in the assassin's klaive allows the holder to do one of three things, after spending a Gnosis Trait — mask his scent for one hour, erase his footprints when he walks for one day or surround himself with absolute silence for one scene. These effects are noticeable by others and bound to cause comment. The klaive inflicts aggravated damage with a successful attack.

Thunder's Bracers

Level 6, Gnosis 9

This mighty fetish is exactly what its name implies it to be — a pair of armor plates for the forearm which are tied to the storm, infused with a portion of Grandfather Thunder himself. There is, to date, only one set in existence, and the Margrave Konietzko wears them. The bracers appear to be made of a deeply stained metal, set with the teeth of an unknown creature. They are a symbol of his power, but not the source of it — the Margrave was crushing his opponents long before he created these bracers, and he will continue to do so should they leave his possession.

Thunder's Bracers have many powers. They increase the wielder's Strength by 4 points, and the wielder may make claw attacks normally. If the wielder uses the bracers to block an attack made with a metal weapon, or with an unarmed attack, the assailant automatically suffers two levels of lethal damage due to the electrical discharge generated by the armor. Additionally, the bracers provide up to four Gnosis points to the wielder per day, which may be used as he sees fit. Finally, the wearer of the bracers may spend three Gnosis points to call forth a bolt of lightning to smite his foes. If there happen to be storm clouds overhead, the lightning comes from them; otherwise, it comes from the bracers themselves. In either case, the lightning deals five levels of aggravated damage to a single target, which may not be soaked by any means.

MET: Thunder's Bracers grant the wielder the Physical Traits *Ferocious* x 4, even if they put him over his maximums, and do not interfere with his ability to fight with claws. If the wielder blocks an attack made with metal weapons (even silver) or with bare hands using the bracers, the attacker suffers two levels of lethal damage caused by electrical discharge. The bracers grant the user four Gnosis Traits a day, which may be used normally. Lastly, the bracers can call forth lightning against a single target, after the wielder spends three Gnosis Traits. If there are storm clouds overhead, the lightning comes from them; otherwise it comes from the bracers. This lightning inflicts five levels of aggravated damage.

Talens

Leech's Blood

Gnosis 3

Many Garou wonder how the Shadow Lords have managed to persist in Eastern Europe despite the vampiric strongholds which seem to dominate the area. While much of the reason has to do with the guile and tenacity of the Lords themselves, talens like this one help ensure that the Lords' Kinfolk will survive even when surrounded by Leeches. They survive because vampires learn not to feed upon them. The vampires never know, after all, one might have Leech's Blood on her person.

This vial of syrupy liquid is useless to Garou, but quite valuable for their Kin. Any human may drink the blood with no ill effects. Any vampire drinking the human's blood, however, suffers one aggravated wound for every blood point drained from the human. The talen's potency takes approximately one minute to make itself manifest, so the vampire may drink quite a bit of blood before she realizes she's been poisoned. Making the talen requires a vial of normal human blood and a fire-spirit, but is otherwise fairly simple. Its potency lasts for one night after being drunk.

MET: Vampires who drink from a human that has consumed *Leech's Blood* suffer one level of aggravated damage for every Blood Trait consumed. These can be healed normally. *Leech's Blood*'s effects last for one night after a human consumes it.

Merits and Flaws

Mentor/Feared Mentor (2-3 point Merit)

While Shadow Lords cannot take the Mentor background, most nonetheless need to receive instruction of some sort before they can learn to be effective manipulators. For two points, you gain a mentor as described in the main Werewolf rules, but no matter his Rank you will never receive more than occasional instruction from him. He will never come to your aid, nor will he ever take responsibility for your actions. You will find yourself serving him more often than the reverse, but if you are canny and clever you may learn more than you ever dreamed possible. For three points, your mentor is particularly well known and feared within your sept (and perhaps within the tribe at large). His influence is such that you gain one additional die to all social rolls with members of your tribe, but you also inherit at least one enemy from your mentor's past. In this case, as is the case with a normal mentor, your mentor doesn't do much to come to your aid, and can't be called a friend or ally. He is simply terrifying enough that others fear you, regardless of how your mentor himself feels about the subject.

MET: For two Traits, you gain a *Mentor*, but his instruction is only occasional and you often end up serving him far more than he assists you. For three Traits, your *Mentor* is exceptionally feared, and among other Shadow Lords, you gain a bonus Trait during Social Challenges (it's the "We have powerful friends — you're going to regret this!" boost), but you also gain at least one of your *Feared Mentor's* enemies. Your *Feared Mentor* is not likely to teach you much or come to your rescue — his mere presence in your life ensures that most folks don't mess with you, though.

Thunder's Child (5 point Merit)

You are especially close to Grandfather Thunder, to the point where even the Theurges of your sept look on you with envy. You gain one temporary Gnosis point when you are exposed to a thunderstorm, which lasts until used or until you leave the storm, and you take one less die of damage from any storm- or electricity-related effects (even if these effects cannot normally be soaked). You also gain one additional die to any Social rolls with storm-spirits or members of Grandfather Thunder's brood (including Stormcrows, Raven- and Crow-spirits, totem spirits, and avatars of Grandfather Thunder himself).

MET: If you are exposed to a thunderstorm, you gain a bonus Gnosis Trait, which can be spent normally. If you leave the storm or it finishes before the Gnosis is used, the Gnosis simply goes away. Storm- or electrical-based damage inflicts one *less* level of damage than normal. You also gain a bonus Trait when in Social Challenges with Grandfather Thunder's brood or storm-spirits.

Conniver (1 point Flaw)

You are a known liar, and nobody trusts you any farther than they can throw you. Whether earned or not, you have a reputation for deceit and treachery, and you lose one die from all Social rolls with other Shadow Lords.

MET: You gain the *Untrustworthy* Negative Social Trait, but gain no bonus for it. You also suffer a one-Trait penalty on any social interactions with other Shadow Lords.

Easily Frightened (3 point Flaw)

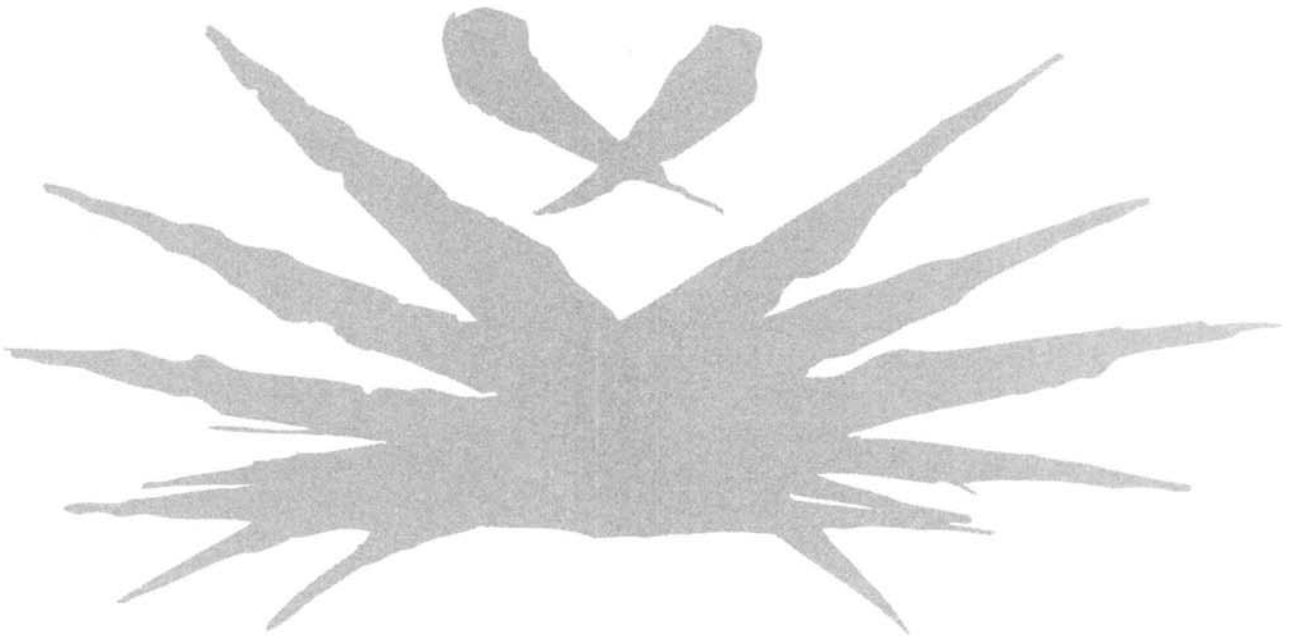
Shadow Lords are drawn to storms like fish to water, but you can't fathom why since you are terrified of storms. Lightning, thunder and forbidding totems like Grandfather Thunder give you the willies, and you just can't keep your cool when exposed to such things. You lose one die from *all* dice pools dealing with interaction between you and other Shadow Lords, and two dice from all pools when interacting with storm-spirits and members of Grandfather Thunder's brood. Shadow Lords tend to think you're weak and cowardly, and they're not far wrong. Players should think long and hard before taking this Flaw, since it will dramatically affect their character's interactions with the entirety of her tribe.

MET: You suffers a one-Trait penalty to *all* challenges between you and other Shadow Lords and a two-Trait penalty when dealing with Grandfather Thunder's brood (Storyteller's discretion how big a penalty you'll take if you actually encounter Grandfather — you may just pass out altogether). This will make for some very long and difficult times with your tribe, so think hard before you take this Flaw.

Gullible (2 point Flaw)

Maybe you're a couple of bricks shy of a load, or maybe you just never learned how to separate truth from fiction. Whatever the cause, you're particularly susceptible to subtle lies and half-truths. You lose three dice from all dice pools relating to guile and subterfuge (not stealth), whether perpetrating your own feeble lies or attempting to penetrate someone else's words to find the truth.

MET: You suffer a three-Trait penalty on challenges related to subterfuge, such trying to discern if someone's lying or making your own attempts to lie. You may never possess the *Subterfuge* Ability.



Chapter Four: Grandfather's Chosen

Knight of Swords, Divinatory Meaning: *A dark-haired, brown-eyed young man strong and domineering, typifying skill and bravery. Someone about to rush head-long into the life of the seeker. The card may stand for skill, bravery, defense or war, conflict, and destruction.*

— Eden Gray, *The Tarot Revealed*

As a general rule of thumb, the Shadow Lords are a tribe bent on getting things done, for better or for worse. Their goals vary tremendously from individual to individual, of course, but most have the interests of Gaia at heart in one way or another. One constant among them, however, is the fact that each is taught from her induction into the tribe that the ends justify the means, and that a suitably noble goal can justify nearly any sacrifice. Thus, Shadow Lords have no true friends — those they know are either allies of convenience, or simply pawns. This gives the Lords a foul reputation throughout the Garou Nation, as no one trusts them to keep their word and most think it likely that any given Lord would sell out his mother for the right price. While this is not the case, many Lords use it to further their own ends — everyone knows a Lord won't do something unless there's something in it for the Lord. But on the other hand, if you know what the Lord wants you can trust him to act according to type. So goes the theory, which in turn gives the Lords power over others.

It should come as no surprise that the truth of the matter is much more complex than the stereotype indicates. Most Lords *will* sacrifice just about anything for the right cause. That much is true. But they are finicky about their causes, and it is typically the cause that is important to them — the ambition to further one's own glory or power is not as common as others might expect. Shadow Lords accept this fact about one another, and are able to function as a tribe because they recognize the fact that they are ultimately expendable in the fight against Gaia. Many Garou are willing to sacrifice themselves for Gaia, but the Lords are willing to sacrifice *others* for Gaia — sacrificing bits of their Mother to save the whole. The Lords presented below exemplify this trait, and are archetypes and icons that may serve to inspire the Cliaths among us. It is easy to condemn the Lords and their ways, but when all is said and done we have to ask ourselves one simple question: reprehensible though they may be, what if they're right? This is the question these worthy Garou seek to answer.

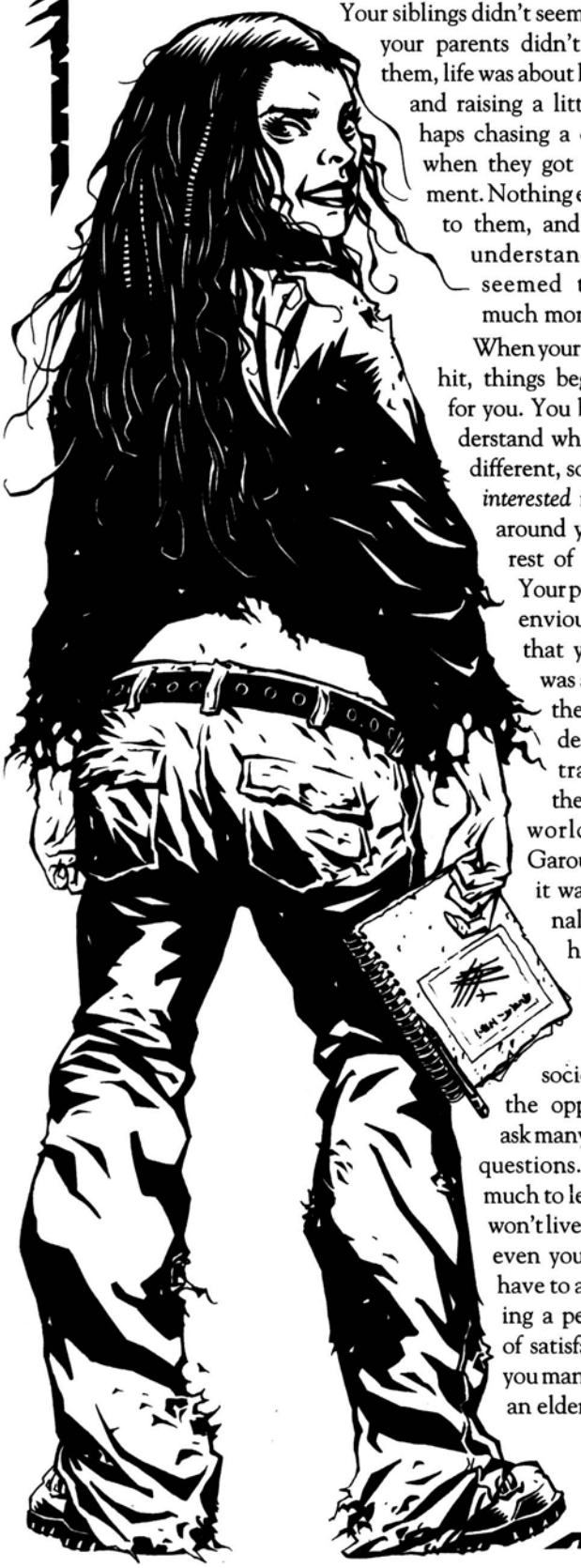
Loyal Beta

Quote: *Don't worry about it. I've taken care of everything.*

Prelude: You were always the curious type, ever since you were a pup sucking at your mother's teat. You always wanted to know how the world around you worked, why things were the way they were, and what everything you saw meant in the grander scheme of things. Your siblings didn't seem to care, and your parents didn't, either. To them, life was about hunting food and raising a litter, and perhaps chasing a crow or two when they got a spare moment. Nothing else mattered to them, and they didn't understand why you seemed to want so much more.

When your First Change hit, things began clicking for you. You began to understand why you felt so different, so much more *interested* in the world around you than the rest of your family. Your packmates are envious of the fact that your Change was so mundane; they all had to deal with great trauma when they entered the world of the Garou, but for you it was just the final piece in a heretofore maddening puzzle.

Garou society gave you the opportunity to ask many, many more questions. There's so much to learn, and you won't live forever. And even your packmates have to admit to feeling a perverse sense of satisfaction when you manage to stump an elder or two with one of your questions. Your innocent curiosity, however, has uncovered some things young Garou aren't necessarily supposed to know, and as a result you've made a few enemies within the sept. But it's of no real concern to you — curiosity is what drives you, and if some people can't handle that you aren't going to lose any sleep over it.



Shadow Lords™

Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Breed: Lupus
Auspice: Ragabash
Camp:

Pack Name:
Pack Totem:
Concept: Loyal Beta

Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●○○○	Charisma	●●●○○	Perception	●●●●○
Dexterity	●●○○○	Manipulation	●●●○○	Intelligence	●●●●○
Stamina	●●○○○	Appearance	●●○○○	Wits	●●●○○

Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledges	
Alertness	●●●○○	Animal Ken	●●●○○	Computer	○○○○○
Athletics	○○○○○	Crafts	○○○○○	Enigmas	●●●●○
Brawl	○○○○○	Drive	○○○○○	Investigation	●●●○○
Dodge	○○○○○	Etiquette	●○○○○	Law	●○○○○
Empathy	●●○○○	Firearms	○○○○○	Linguistics	●○○○○
Expression	●○○○○	Leadership	○○○○○	Medicine	●○○○○
Intimidation	○○○○○	Melee	○○○○○	Occult	●●●○○
Primal-Urge	○○○○○	Performance	○○○○○	Politics	○○○○○
Streetwise	○○○○○	Stealth	●●○○○	Rituals	●●●○○
Subterfuge	●●●○○	Survival	○○○○○	Science	●○○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds		Gifts	Gifts
Rites	●●○○○	Fatal Flaw	
Totem	●●●○○	Heightened Senses	
	○○○○○	Open Seal	
	○○○○○		
	○○○○○		

Renown

Glory ○○○○○○○○○○ ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
Honor ●○○○○○○○○○ ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
Wisdom ●●○○○○○○○○ ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Rank
1

Rage ●○○○○○○○○○ ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Gnosis ●●●●●○○○○○ ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Willpower ●●●○○○○○○○ ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Health

Bruised		☐
Hurt	-1	☐
Injured	-1	☐
Wounded	-2	☐
Mauled	-2	☐
Crippled	-5	☐
Incapacitated		☐

Tribal Weakness

FAILURE'S DAGGER:
-1 RENOWN FOR FAILURE

Concept: You have no real interest in gaining or exercising power over others, which makes you a bit of an oddity among your tribe. You're content to remain the loyal beta in your pack, always asking questions and seeing what the others tend to miss. You've learned that some things are amiss in your sept, though, and you have to wonder how they'll affect your pack's future. It's not in your nature to undermine the positions of others, but you'll make damn sure that your pack won't suffer just because some elder wants to advance his own agendas.

Roleplaying Notes: Tradition means nothing to you, and ceremony irritates you. Question everything, both because you want to know why and because you can get away with asking. Your curiosity irritates your packmates, but it has proven useful enough that they don't complain about it — much. Stay close to your packmates, but be sure they deserve your confidence and trust. If they don't, you might have to rethink your place in the pack, and in the sept at large.

Equipment: Beaten up human clothes (you tend to gnaw on them when you're in wolf form and lost in thought), pencil, notebook filled with trivia.

Subversive Mystic

Quote: *It is pointless to throw ourselves against the Wyrm from without. Our only hope is to become a part of it, and to defeat it from within.*

Prelude: For as long as you can remember, the world has felt off to you in some fashion. You could never quite put your finger on why or how, but you always suspected there was something else moving around beneath the skin of the world everyone seems to take for granted. When your First Change came upon you, you met it with something approaching relief. Now at last you understood why you'd always felt so different. To your dismay, however, that surreal sense that something was out of place still didn't go away; the poor fit between you and the people around you was explained, but the strangeness of the world continued to gnaw at you.

It was only when the others took you in that you were able to finally understand what it was you'd been sensing all this time. The taint of the Wyrm was on everything around you, and you could sense it even before your First Change. The Garou around you spoke endlessly about fighting the Wyrm, about destroying corrupted beings and fixing the damage the Wyrm caused, but this is all nonsense to you. The Wyrm cannot be defeated in direct battle. It can only be fought from within, and that means you need to enter its midst before you can effect any lasting change.

SHADOW LORDS

Name:	Breed: Homid	Pack Name:
Player:	Auspice: Theurge	Pack Totem:
Chronicle:	Camp:	Concept: Subversive Mystic

Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●○○○	Charisma	●●○○○	Perception	●●●●○
Dexterity	●●○○○	Manipulation	●●●●○	Intelligence	●●●○○
Stamina	●●○○○	Appearance	●●○○○	Wits	●●●○○

Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledges	
Alertness	●●●○○	Animal Ken	○○○○○	Computer	○○○○○
Athletics	○○○○○	Crafts	●○○○○	Enigmas	●●●○○
Brawl	○○○○○	Drive	○○○○○	Investigation	●●○○○
Dodge	○○○○○	Etiquette	●●○○○	Law	○○○○○
Empathy	●●○○○	Firearms	○○○○○	Linguistics	○○○○○
Expression	○○○○○	Leadership	○○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Intimidation	○○○○○	Melee	○○○○○	Occult	●●●○○
Primal-Urge	●●●○○	Performance	○○○○○	Politics	●●○○○
Streetwise	○○○○○	Stealth	●●○○○	Rituals	●●●●○
Subterfuge	●○○○○	Survival	○○○○○	Science	○○○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds		Gifts	Gifts
Fetish	●●●○○	Aura of Confidence	
Rites	●●●●●	Persuasion	
	○○○○○	Sense Wyrm	
	○○○○○		
	○○○○○		

Renown	Rage	Health	
Glory ○○○○○○○○○○ □□□□□□□□□□	●●○○○○○○○○ □□□□□□□□□□	Bruised	□
Honor ○○○○○○○○○○ □□□□□□□□□□	Gnosis ●●●●●●○○○○ □□□□□□□□□□	Hurt -1	□
Wisdom ●●●○○○○○○○ □□□□□□□□□□	Willpower ●●●○○○○○○○ □□□□□□□□□□	Injured -1	□
Rank 1		Wounded -2	□
		Mauled -2	□
		Crippled -5	□
		Incapacitated	□

Tribal Weakness: FAILURE'S DAGGER: -1 RENOWN FOR FAILURE

Your packmates think you're crazy. Hell, your whole *sept* thinks you're crazy. But you're recently learned that you're not alone in your opinions. There are other Garou, other Shadow Lords, who think as you do. Crazy or not, the time is coming soon when you'll have to make a decision about how to proceed.

Concept: You have no interest in manipulating the affairs of the Garou Nation. You're set on descending into the depths of Malfeas and seeing what comes out the other side, and nothing and no one is going to stop you. The things you're contemplating scare you a lot, but as far as you can tell there's just no other way to fix the terrible things that are wrong with the world. You have no wish to drag your packmates along with you, however, since this is a quest best undertaken on one's own. So you bide your time, waiting for the opportunity you need to split from your pack and embark on your quest.

Roleplaying Notes: You're somber and moody, but skilled in the mystic arts and fiercely dedicated to your packmates. You tend to ponder the spirits around you, and often seem to be lost in thought as a result. Political games bore you, but that doesn't mean you have no understanding of power or how to use it. Keep your more outlandish ideas to yourself, as they tend to worry your packmates and your elders. Your goal is to conquer the Wyrm, not fall to it, and you have to be sure that they understand that.

Equipment: Backpack, fetishes and talens, items of chiminage for spirits.

Executioner

Quote: *No, I'm afraid it's quite too late to make your pleas to Gaia now. You have sinned against Her, and your judgment is now at hand. Time to atone.*

Prelude: All your life, you've lived within the sept. In fact, you've never known anything else. All the politicking, all the lies, all the rationalizations — you've heard them all a thousand times before. You always thought there had to be some better way of doing things, but this was the way life was. It was simply your lot, so what could you do?

All of this changed one day when you came upon an old Theurge burying the remains of a human woman. You knew enough about the man to guess exactly what had happened: One of his pet Cliaths had killed the woman by mistake, and the elder was covering his pupil's tracks. Disgust welled up within you, and you demanded to know what was going on. He confirmed your suspicions, and spoke of keeping this matter your little secret. At that moment, something inside of you snapped, and you answered his plea by punching your fist through his chest. Now, ironically, you found yourself disposing of *his* body, as you vowed to punish all who would so grossly violate the law in such a fashion.

Your passion has caught the attention of a number of elders, who mostly want to see you kept busy so that you cannot interfere with their own indiscretions. But some have begun to look on you with favor. You have been placed with a pack of Cliaths, many of whom have only recently undergone their First Change, and they look to you for guidance and support. Though it pains you to admit it, the truth is that you are no more experienced than they are when it comes to fighting the Wyrm. While you are as passionate as any Garou about fighting the Wyrm, however, your main interest is in the other Garou you encounter. Few are as dedicated as they ought to be, and many are impure in some form or another. There is much work for you to do, but that's fine. You are eager to get on with it.

Concept: The Garou around you have forgotten the intent of the Litany, and you aim to remind them in the worst possible way. Minor transgressions of the sacred tenets do not bother you much, but you will not overlook crimes against Gaia for any reason. You try to keep your activities separate from the rest of your pack, since you do not want to cause trouble for them, but your memory is long and your strength great, and you aim to use both to punish anyone who escapes the justice of the sept.

Roleplaying Notes: The law is everything to you, and you will not tolerate any sort of deviation from that law. Assert your authority in any way you have to; just make sure that no one, human or lupus, Cliath or revered elder, escapes the justice of your claws. Speak harshly when it comes to matters of Gaia's will; you know the right of things, and if others do not recognize that fact it falls to you to make them understand.

Equipment: Klaive.

Shadow Lords

Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Breed: Metis
Auspice: Philodox
Camp:

Pack Name:
Pack Totem:
Concept: Executioner

Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●●●●	Charisma	●●○○○	Perception	●●○○○
Dexterity	●●○○○	Manipulation	●●●●○	Intelligence	●●○○○
Stamina	●●●○○	Appearance	●●○○○	Wits	●●○○○

Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledges	
Alertness	●●●○○	Animal Ken	○○○○○	Computer	○○○○○
Athletics	○○○○○	Crafts	○○○○○	Enigmas	●●○○○
Brawl	●●●●●	Drive	○○○○○	Investigation	●●○○○
Dodge	○○○○○	Etiquette	●●○○○	Law	●●●●●
Empathy	○○○○○	Firearms	○○○○○	Linguistics	○○○○○
Expression	○○○○○	Leadership	○○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Intimidation	●●●●●	Melee	○○○○○	Occult	○○○○○
Primal-Urge	●●○○○	Performance	○○○○○	Politics	○○○○○
Streetwise	○○○○○	Stealth	●●●○○	Rituals	●●○○○
Subterfuge	●●○○○	Survival	○○○○○	Science	○○○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds		Gifts	Gifts
Fetish	●●●●○	Fatal Flaw	
Totem	●●○○○	Primal Anger	
	○○○○○	Truth of Gaia	
	○○○○○		
	○○○○○		

Renown

Glory ○○○○○○○○○○ □□□□□□□□□□

Honor ●●○○○○○○○○ □□□□□□□□□□

I'm ○○○ □□□

Rage ●●●●●○○○○○ □□□□□□□□□□

Gnosis ●●●○○○○○○○ □□□□□□□□□□

Willpower ●●●○○○○○○○ □□□□□□□□□□

Health

Bruised		❑
Hurt	-1	❑
Injured	-1	❑
Wounded	-2	❑
Mauled	-2	❑
Crippled	-5	❑
Incapacitated		❑

Tribal Weakness

FAILURE'S DAGGER:
-1 RENOWN FOR FAILURE

Power Broker

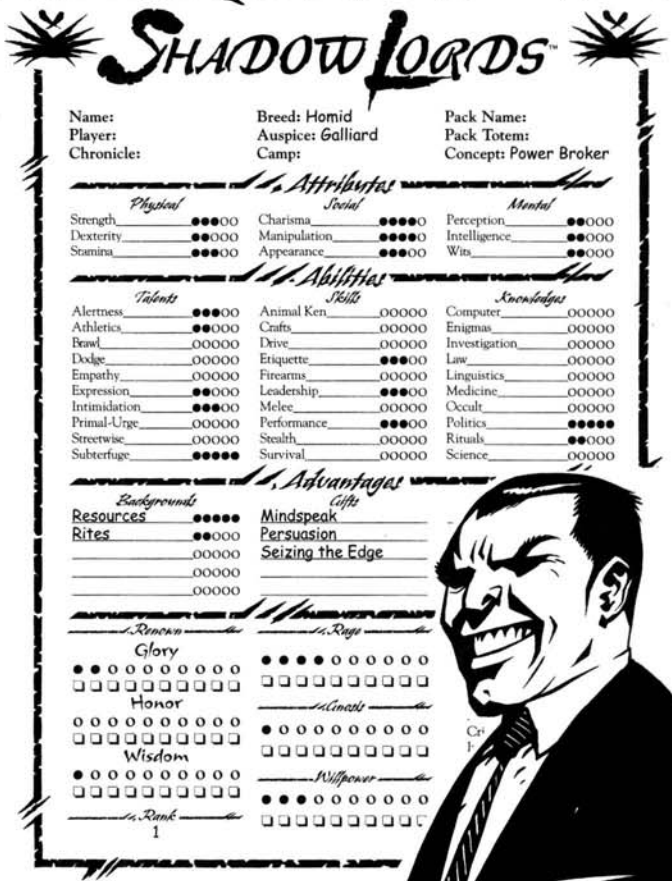
Quote: *I don't think you understand, chum. See, all those allies you think you have are in my back pocket. All the resources you depend on belong to me. I'm the one with the power, and I'm the one in charge. So let's talk again about that favor you're going to do for me.*

Prelude: Some people are just born to rule. It's the way of things — those who are alphas rise to positions of power, while those who aren't inevitably become servants. That's how it's always been, and that's how it's meant to be. You are a Garou, one of the ruling elite, and nothing would please you more than to see your tribe rise to dominance in the Garou Nation and start putting every non-Garou in their proper place.

The elders of your sept don't much care for your attitude. That's not surprising, since they know you're a threat to the power they possess. If they were as good as they thought they were, they would have dealt with you a long time ago, and their failure to do so gives you all sorts of ideas for how things ought to change in your sept. But although you may be thinking of ways to oust the elders, your primary concern is still fighting the Wyrm and keeping your Kin safe. The powerful don't remain so if they don't attend to their responsibilities. Your pack also views you with suspicion, but that's just because they don't like feeling inferior. You often suspect that your talents might make them feel like prey, but you haven't confirmed this theory as of yet. It's of no real consequence, though; so long as they obey, you're sure all will remain well.

Privately, in that little part of your mind that you refuse to acknowledge, you know that a good portion of your talk is just that — talk. You're not quite as good as you pretend to be, and you know it. Someday, if you're not careful, that seed of doubt might catch up with you and destroy you. This is your greatest fear, and you constantly pray to Gaia that no one discovers it.

Concept: You were born to rule, and you're damn good at it. You watch the world around you and seize every opportunity that comes your way, exploiting others in every way you can imagine so that you can cow them into submission. Your tribe is filled with such people, however, and many of them are far more skilled at the power game than you are. Some have taken it upon themselves to teach you a lesson or two in an effort to see that you learn humility. It hasn't worked yet, but you're beginning to get the point.



SHADOW LORDS

Name: | Breed: Homid | Pack Name:
Player: | Auspice: Galliard | Pack Totem:
Chronicle: | Camp: | Concept: Power Broker

Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●●○○	Charisma	●●●●○	Perception	●●○○○
Dexterity	●●○○○	Manipulation	●●●●○	Intelligence	●●○○○
Stamina	●●●○○	Appearance	●●●○○	Wits	●●○○○

Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledges	
Alertness	●●●○○	Animal Ken	○○○○○	Computer	○○○○○
Athletics	●●○○○	Crafts	○○○○○	Enigmas	○○○○○
Brawl	○○○○○	Drive	○○○○○	Investigation	○○○○○
Dodge	○○○○○	Etiquette	●●●○○	Law	○○○○○
Empathy	○○○○○	Firearms	○○○○○	Linguistics	○○○○○
Expression	●●○○○	Leadership	●●●○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Intimidation	●●●○○	Melee	○○○○○	Occult	○○○○○
Primal-Urge	○○○○○	Performance	●●●○○	Politics	●●●●●
Streetwise	○○○○○	Stealth	○○○○○	Rituals	●●○○○
Subterfuge	●●●●●	Survival	○○○○○	Science	○○○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds		Gifts
Resources	●●●●●	Mindspeak
Rites	●●○○○	Persuasion
	○○○○○	Seizing the Edge
	○○○○○	
	○○○○○	

Renown: Glory ●●○○○○○○○○ Honor ○○○○○○○○○○ Wisdom ●○○○○○○○○○

Rank: 1

Rage: ●●●●○○○○○○

Gnosis: ●○○○○○○○○○

Willpower: ●●●○○○○○○○

Roleplaying Notes: Many Lords find your bravado amusing, but you haven't yet learned to respect your betters. As far as you're concerned, the best a person can manage is to be your equal. Treat everyone around you as though they are inferior and incompetent — it's a safe bet they probably are. Remind your packmates and your elders of the power you wield at every opportunity, as it's important that they always realize who it is they're messing with.

Equipment: Tailored suit, expensive car, mobile phone, lists of contacts, datapad with lots of dirty little secrets in it.

Wyrm Hunter

Quote: *Oh, do not worry, my little friend. Soon you will be back in Malfeas, where you belong.*

Prelude: The spirit of the storm sings in your veins, and it's made your life fairly hellish. You've had... anger management issues, let's say, since you were a child, and they only became worse as you grew into maturity. Things got easier when others of your kind found you after your Change, and explained to you who you are and why you feel the things you do. You learned that you were an Ahroun, a warrior, meant to fight for Gaia and destroy those who would prey upon Her creations. You learned that you were a child of Grandfather Thunder, and that his fury commands your blood. Most importantly, you learned that you were among the greatest of your kind, a warrior who's tasted power and learned how to use it to crush others.

When the Garou of your sept saw the power at your command, they took it as a sign that things were looking up for the sept. You justified their confidence in you during your Rite of Passage, when you led the charge to destroy a nest of vampires. No one had ever taken to being a Garou quite so well as you have, and your eagerness both gratified and frightened your elders. You had tasted power, and it only served to fuel your ambition. Soon, you had your eye on the leadership of your pack, and who knows where you'll go from there?

Your elders see your potential, and it frightens them. They hope you will remain a useful pawn, but they fear that you'll quickly grow too powerful to effectively control, and this leaves them feeling vulnerable. They're thinking small, though. Why bother with a sept when entire regions can be yours for the taking? If you're going to crush the Wyrm, you have to get cracking and *do* it. The politics and the bickering can go hang as far as you're concerned — you have Wyrm things to destroy, and everyone else around you can either follow you or get the hell out of the way.

Concept: You are the will of Gaia and the fury of Grandfather Thunder made manifest, and nothing can stand in your way. The Shadow Lords you've met think you have more in common with a Fenrir than with "true" Shadow Lords, and they aren't far wrong. Your strength and rage are frightening, and they combine with a truly devious mind to produce a raw force of nature that even veteran warriors find impressive. With strength and power come arrogance, however, and you have little respect for those you deem unworthy (which is just about everyone). This has made you enemies, so you'd best watch your step.

Roleplaying Notes: Your pack fears you, but they also respect you. Your rise to the position of pack alpha is a certainty, and people follow you because you're very good at getting things done. Sitting around and strategizing bores you; you're much more comfortable in taking action *now*, and trusting in Gaia to give you the inspiration to deal with any unexpected complications as they come up. It's not like any plan ever survives contact with the enemy anyway, so why get bent out of shape over the details?

Equipment: Backpack, fang dagger, flak jacket, flame-thrower (no one's quite sure how you got this; all they know is that vampires cook up *real* good), shit eating grin

Shadow Lords

Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Breed: Homid
Auspice: Ahroun
Camp:

Pack Name:
Pack Totem:
Concept: Wyrm-Hunter

Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●●●○	Charisma	●●○○○	Perception	●●○○○
Dexterity	●●●●●	Manipulation	●●●●○	Intelligence	●●○○○
Stamina	●●●○○	Appearance	●●○○○	Wits	●●○○○

Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledges	
Alertness	●●○○○	Animal Ken	○○○○○	Computer	○○○○○
Athletics	○○○○○	Crafts	○○○○○	Enigmas	○○○○○
Brawl	●●●○○	Drive	○○○○○	Investigation	●●○○○
Dodge	●●●○○	Etiquette	●●○○○	Law	○○○○○
Empathy	○○○○○	Firearms	●●●○○	Linguistics	○○○○○
Expression	○○○○○	Leadership	●●○○○	Medicine	●○○○○
Intimidation	●●●○○	Melee	●●●○○	Occult	○○○○○
Primal-Urge	●●○○○	Performance	○○○○○	Politics	●●○○○
Streetwise	○○○○○	Stealth	○○○○○	Rituals	○○○○○
Subterfuge	●●●●●	Survival	○○○○○	Science	○○○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds		Gifts	Gifts
Fetish	●●●○○	The Falling Touch	
Resources	●●●○○	Fatal Flaw	
	○○○○○	Master of Fire	
	○○○○○		
	○○○○○		

Renown: Glory ●●○○○○○○○○ ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐; Honor ●○○○○○○○○○ ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐; Wisdom ○○○○○○○○○○ ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Rank: 1

Rage: ●●●●●●●●○○ ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Gnosis: ●●●○○○○○○○ ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Willpower: ●●●○○○○○○○ ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Health:

Bruised		☐
Hurt	-1	☐
Injured	-1	☐
Wounded	-2	☐
Mauled	-2	☐
Crippled	-5	☐
Incapacitated		☐

Tribal Weakness: FAILURE'S DAGGER: -1 RENOWN FOR FAILURE

Shadow Lords of Note

Pavel begins his final tales of the evening:

Thunder's Roar

The birth of a metis is always a tragedy, but sometimes it heralds the coming of something far, far worse. Such was the case with Thunder's Roar, a metis so large that his birth killed his mother. Though he at first seemed fairly unremarkable for a metis — he had no apparent disfigurements and, apart from his size, appeared normal in all respects — the nature of his curse made itself apparent later on in life. He was a calm child, and had superior control of his rage, but was prone to fits of madness with no apparent cause. Some suspected him to be a creature of the Wyrm, but it was not so. He was simply a metis, and one who frightened even the fiercest Ahroun in his sept.

Thunder's Roar had, at most times, a remarkably calm persona. He was said to be difficult to provoke, even under conditions of extreme duress, and saved his sept from Wyrm invasion on more than one occasion. His control had a flip side, however; the control he exerted can be unleashed at will, resulting in frenzies that made him frightening indeed. Some Garou are at the mercy of their rage, but not Thunder's Roar; his rage was firmly under his control. It was just his mind that evaded his grasp on occasion. You see, he suffered from a madness that fosters obsession in the victim, and it was only a matter of time before that obsession found a target.

The pain of knowing he killed his mother was the start of the obsession; no one takes well to being responsible for a loved one's death, and Thunder's Roar was no exception. But as he learned of the circumstances leading to his birth, and of the Litany law that forbade it, he began to understand the blasphemy that was his existence. He could have ended it, of course, but that was far too simple. It did not address any of the harm he had already done, and it didn't benefit the world as a whole. No, Thunder's Roar would have to choose a different way to atone for his sins. He would make all that transgressed as his parents had pay the ultimate price for their lack of vision. He would, in fact, destroy those who dared to violate the tenets of the Litany.

Of course, even in the 12th century the world was a big place. Thunder's Roar knew he would have much to do. But that was fine; it gave him a mission to focus on, and put things in the proper context. He began by learning all he could about Litany law. This was a difficult task, both because the information he sought was typically reserved for elders and because of the ignominious status of his birth. But he persevered, and his genial nature eventually won his elders over. They did not know why he was so eager to learn these things, but they paid it no mind; they simply attributed it to his Philodox nature.

Thunder's Roar learned other things as well. He used his great size and his ability to walk among humans to learn all the arts of smithing, so that he could make for himself a great silver axe. It was

surely a painful task, but his obsession kept him at the forge until his work was completed He used it, at first, to strike down his enemies, vampire and Garou alike, and few could oppose him. It was only when he had completed his more scholarly pursuits that he turned the axe to its true purpose.

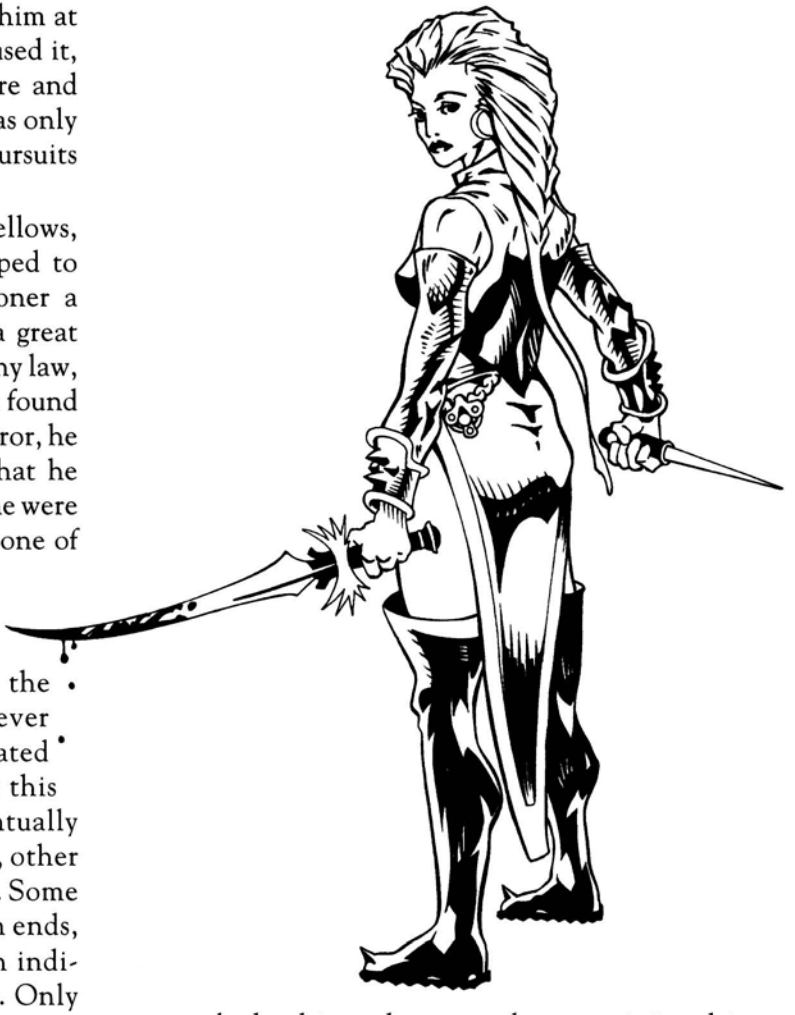
When the giant Garou turned on his fellows, their shock and horror left them ill-equipped to appreciate just how wondrous an executioner a twelve-foot tall, one-ton Crinos wielding a great silver axe can be. Quoting passages from Litany law, he tore through his sept, cutting down all he found unworthy. With the survivors quaking in horror, he moved on, visiting other Garou septs so that he could sniff out the unclean among them. None were safe from his scrutiny, and he soon became one of the most feared Garou in all of Europe.

Even when in the grip of his derangement, Thunder's Roar was always scrupulous about maintaining the integrity of the Litany. He always protected the Veil, and never harmed a Garou who had not willfully violated one tenet or another of Litany law. It was this steadfast adherence to an ideal that eventually saw Thunder's Roar saddled with followers, other Shadow Lords who appreciated his zealotry. Some sought to use his ideals to further their own ends, but he would have none of it; these selfish individuals met his axe as readily as any other. Only the pure were allowed to remain at his side, and many Shadow Lord scholars surmise that it was the threat of their vengeance that kept the Shadow Lords, and indeed all the Garou of Europe, sane during many of the twelfth century's most trying times.

Thunder's Roar's zealotry did not die with him, of course. His followers preserved his ideals and continued his work, and continue to do so to this day. They are, all of them, Philodox, and they are known around the world as the Judges of Doom.

The Iron Maiden

The wars and chaos associated with Vlad Dracul's reign in 15th century Wallachia led to many unexpected events, but some were shocking even by Garou standards. One such event was the rape of Celestina Gregoras, known as Celestina the Brave, Warder of the Sept of the Night Sky. It is difficult to imagine one Garou raping another, but these were crazed times, and Celestina's assailant



succumbed to his madness utterly, committing this and many other depraved acts before he was finally put down. To Celestina's dismay her attacker's crime bore fruit, and she gave birth to a metis several months later.

Like all metis, Celestina's child was far from normal. However, in stark contrast to most metis, the babe had no physical deformities; she was, in fact, quite beautiful to behold. The problem lay in her *presence*. All Garou unsettle humans to a greater or lesser extent; the effect is magnified in those who are blessed with a prodigious amount of Rage. But in young Sonja's case, the effect on human and Garou alike made even the fiercest Ahroun seem tame by comparison. The sept voted to destroy the child, but Celestina was resolute: she did not care that her daughter's mere existence was a violation of the Litany, nor that her septmates looked on in terror every time the child was brought into the room. She would raise her child, and if anyone tried to take the babe away she would tear them to pieces.

Despite Celestina's best efforts, Sonja had a miserable childhood. Nobody trusted her, and even her mother feared her. Small wonder, then, that she developed an insular and severe personality. Miserable as she was, however, she still had no desire to die at the claws of vampires. So it was that she proved her worth, fighting off a half-dozen attackers during one of the vampires' incessant raids. With the bodies of the Leeches all around her, her critics had no choice but to accept her; she was too valuable to ignore any longer.

That grudging acceptance was the foot in the door Sonja needed to join Shadow Lord society. And join it she did: while she'd already proven to be a competent warrior, she also discovered she was quite an effective leader. She learned to use her aura of dread to her advantage, combining it with her silver hair and coal-black eyes to create an implacable persona. Her septmates feared her, but they also obeyed her, particularly once her tactics against the Leeches proved sound. Fear gave way to admiration as she proved herself skilled in the art of fetish creation as well; the Shadow Lords have her to thank for the talen Leech's Blood, which has saved thousands of Kin lives in the centuries since.

In her later years, Sonja became the Warder of the Sept of the Night Sky, and her iron hand managed to keep it safe during some of Wallachia's most difficult times. She eventually fell in battle against the Leeches, struck down by one of their unholy wizards, but not before she destroyed some of their most powerful warriors. She is remembered today with the highest honor a metis can receive, and serves as an example of what can be accomplished even when the world is arrayed against you.

Blackfang

When humans prey upon wolves, whether they kill them because they're threats to livestock or simply out of spite, the wolves are typically unable to respond. They either run, or fall prey to human malice. When the wolf in question is a Garou, however, he has a third option — he can attack. This is what the great lupus known as Blackfang chose to do, and he reigns in infamy as one of the greatest Shadow Lord butchers of all time.

Blackfang was born in Vivarais, Auvergne in France in 1762. He and his pack were constantly at odds with humanity, since they ate the humans' livestock, which led to the humans in turn hunting the wolves. When Blackfang underwent his First Change, however, and learned of his Shadow Lord heritage and what it meant, he learned to think of humans as more than simple predators. He learned to think of them as his prey.

It's no secret that many Shadow Lords were among the Garou least satisfied with the terms of the Concord. They were, in fact, strongly in favor of continuing the Impergium unabated, of ruthlessly controlling humanity and limiting its spread. While most Lords were smart enough to realize that attempting such a task was a fool's errand — both because it was against Gaia's will, and because doing so would only worsen relations between humans and wolves — Blackfang suffered from no such inhibitions. Humans were vermin as far as he concerned, and he vowed to exterminate them just as they were trying to exterminate wolves.

Blackfang's path of bloodshed began in Vivarais, where he slaughtered a dozen humans in the span of a week. He was not alone in his debauchery; two great Kin accompanied him, huge black wolves that were steeped in hatred and knew no fear of humans.

Two months after their killing spree began, the trio moved to Gevauden, and it was there that the pack took to hunting humans with a zeal that would do Red Talons proud. Over the course of the next three years they killed well over a hundred humans, making them some of the greatest serial killers the Garou Nation has ever known.

The Shadow Lords, of course, had no choice but to hunt him down. His actions threatened to tear the Veil to pieces, and the humans already had plenty of reasons to hunt and kill Europe's wolves. But Blackfang knew the area well, and proved to be elusive quarry. Further, he was not alone in his work; a number of other Garou, both Shadow Lords and Red Talons, aided and abetted the rogue lupus, giving him shelter so that his pursuers would fail in their mission. Of course, the fact he could walk as a man helped; after all, his pursuers were looking for a wolf, not a human.

Clever as Blackfang was, the bloodbath he'd triggered couldn't go on forever. Humans have their limits, and once they choose to fight back they make clever and dangerous foes. King Louis the XV sent out dozens of men to find the man-eating wolves, and in September of 1765 one of Blackfang's Kin was killed by Antoine de Beauterne, a great wolfhunter and game warden for the king. Thinking it was Blackfang himself who was killed, people around France erupted into celebration. As the news spread, however, Blackfang's killing spree continued unabated. Two long years later, on the 18th of June, 1767, a local farmer named Jean Chastel planted a silver bullet in Blackfang's chest, ending his reign of terror forever. Chastel was Kin to us, and he and a number of other locals organized a hunting party to track down the last of Blackfang's Kin. The party's efforts were successful; Blackfang's mate was killed one week later, ending a legend that has haunted the Shadow Lords ever since.

Evelyn Constantine

Born to a wealthy media mogul in New York City, Eve Constantine became a power broker of admirable ability long before she knew anything of her Shadow Lord heritage. She cultivated a taste for subterfuge while earning her MBA at Harvard business school, and managed to use a combination of business acumen, physical charms, and political ruthlessness to put all of her father's business associates in her back pocket. A further bit of clever manipulation led to her brothers falling from grace in their father's eyes, leaving her sole heir to his considerable fortune.

Eve became even more intimidating once she'd undergone her belated First Change. She took to Shadow Lord society like a fish to water, and quickly managed to amass a considerable power base for herself within the tribe. Unimpressed with what she considered the overemphasis on "spiritual nonsense," Eve focused all of her attention on grabbing more and more power for herself, the better to crush her rivals and make her enemies suffer. She became, in essence, the archetypal Lord of the Summit, consumed by her lust for power to the point where everything else in the world around her was meaningless to her.

If this were all there was to her tale, I would not bother to relate it. But some things begin small.

This story began with an old rival, a vampire Eve had humiliated years before. We do not choose to remember his name, for that would grant him unearned respect. This vampire entered the tale by setting in motion an intricate plan of revenge designed to utterly destroy Eve's family and way of life. To start, he set about corrupting one of Eve's few real friends in the world, a woman who had stood by her despite Eve's callous nature. Eve was forced to destroy her closest friend in the world, and she vowed revenge ten times over. But her rival, the vampire, had already chosen to raise the stakes. He called on one of the oldest enemies of our tribe, a fiend and butcher of the Old World, an elder vampire of great cunning and cruelty —Vladimir Rustovitch.

Rustovitch entered the game by murdering Constantine's father, even as the lesser bloodsucker sabotaged one of her most lucrative companies. Unprepared to face two fiends of such power at once, Eve turned to her sept for help. That was when everything changed. Eve was used to betrayal, and it was not unreasonable for her to expect it here; many of her septmates would have found her fall delightful, but the chance to take out centuries' worth of grudges on the hated Rustovitch was too much for them to pass up. They stood with her, giving Eve a much-needed chance to redeem herself. It was an opportunity she didn't pass up.

Individually, Shadow Lords are master manipulators. They are not at home among humans as the vampires and Glass Walkers are, but they are still capable enough that they can exert considerable

influence in the human sphere. But when they work together, it is a thing of wonder to behold. Eve's sept called in favors left and right, calling in allies from all over the state in their quest to destroy Rustovitch and the lesser thing that had summoned him. The war claimed the lives of half a dozen Garou elders, heroes all, but Rustovitch the Butcher was dead at last, so much dust on the wind.

And the would-be aristocratic vampire who started it all? He now abides in Eve's basement with a stake through his heart and no blood in his stomach. His killing's going to take a long, long time, and Eve will savor every minute of it.

Eve's motives and goals have changed substantially in the wake of her war with the pair of vampires. In addition to shifting her attention toward thwarting vampires specifically, instead of just amassing power for herself, Eve has also begun to investigate the activities of Pentex and its subsidiary companies. What she has discovered disgusts her, and she is doing all she can to build her capital to the point where she can confront the Wyrm's business dealings directly. Her star is rising in Shadow Lord circles, to the point where Margrave Konietzko has contacted her in hopes of enticing her to shift some of her business interests to Eastern Europe. That isn't practical enough to be useful as of yet, but Eve is working on making it happen. When it does, the Margrave might well become unstoppable.

Whispers in Darkness

Most Garou recognize the need to combat the Wyrm in some fashion or other, and do what they can to hold the beast at bay. Most Garou also think their way of doing things is the right way, and seek to convince or coerce other Garou into following their lead. Very few Garou, however, have the will to stab into the heart of the Wyrm alone, bereft of pack and Kin, unknown and unappreciated, doomed to be forgotten even if they succeed. Whispers in Darkness is one such Garou.

Whispers first made his presence known several years ago, when he walked right into a Black Fury sept and described the structure of a nearby Black Spiral Dancer Hive in intricate detail. He said he planned to destroy the Hive, but that the plan would have a greater chance of succeeding if the sept would consent to help. As the stunned Furies listened, he told them how he would sabotage the Hive's security, leaving the Furies an opening to destroy the Dancers who had plagued them for some years. After some deliberation, the sept elders decided to check the visitor's story out. True to his word, Whispers knocked the Dancers' Hive out of whack, setting them up nicely for the Furies to take down. To their consternation, however, the mysterious Garou who opened the door for them was nowhere to be found. One of the Furies caught a glimpse of him during the battle, but he could not be found in the aftermath of the Hive's destruction. He had moved on, his task completed.

In the months that followed, Whispers followed the same pattern with other septs around the world. He would show up, relate some critical information about a threat the sept was facing, infiltrate the enemy's stronghold, and tear it down from within. When the deed was done, he disappeared without a trace. As Garou around the world began to investigate the elusive Garou's activities, they found only one thing to be certain: He was Thunder's child, and that made him a Shadow Lord.

As the evidence started flowing in, Shadow Lord investigators began to put the pieces together. The mysterious Garou appears at night, and usually speaks in subdued tones, prompting one investigator to give him the moniker "Whispers in Darkness". He favors the Lupus form, which suggests he is of the wolf-breed, and his tactics can only be those of a Ragabash. He appears to be a master of disguise — one Bone Gnawer pack claims that he took the form of a Wyrm Abomination (complete with taint) to infiltrate a fomori nest, and there's no reason to doubt their word since the rest of their story checks out. Finally, his *modus operandi* indicates that he is likely a Bringer of Light, which explains his independent streak. What it does not explain is the infernal secrecy surrounding his every move; the Gifts he uses are only available to those of significant rank in Shadow Lord society, and yet this Garou is so secretive that no one even knows his name! The spirits must know of his exploits, but for them to be so close-mouthed about such a topic is unprecedented.

His mysterious activities aside, few can deny the impact Whispers in Darkness is having on the tribe. Many Lords feel shamed by his actions, as he is clearly not interested either in personal power or renown throughout the tribe. It is likely that he has support of one sort or another, as no Garou, not even a Bringer of Light, can operate independently and learn the tricks Whispers has learned. This has the Judges of Doom wondering how to deal with the issue; it's nice that Whispers is setting up the destruction of enemy strongholds left and right, but the fact that he's doing it unaided is somewhat troubling. Further, if he can get by without aid from the rest of the tribe, what's to stop a rogue Shadow Lord from doing the same thing — with much more malevolent intentions? The Judges can't afford to be blasé about the issue, and how they choose to handle it could have serious repercussions for the tribe as a whole.

Miguel Gutierrez

The mantle of power associated with being a Shadow Lord Theurge is difficult to wear. Leaders expect you to foretell the future, packmates ask you for mystical advice, and everyone views you with suspicion and a keen eye for treachery. This is the way of things, and Miguel Gutierrez understood this. He was, however, quite unusual among Shadow Lords in that he had no real appreciation for the rewards power could bring. To him it was all stuff and nonsense, and this made him a social misfit even before his life *really* began to diverge from the norm.

The youngest of six children, Miguel was born in Guadalupe, Mexico. In addition to being a suburb of Monterrey, Guadalupe is also a stone's throw away from Mexico's largest national park, Cumbres de Monterrey, and it's here that Miguel spent much of his time while growing up. He was very poor, but that never stopped him from appreciating the world around him and his place in it. This perspective tempered the rage associated with his First Change, which was much less violent than that of most other Garou, and he emerged from the ordeal as one who had experienced a spiritual awakening. This unusual circumstance, along with the even temper that accompanied it, was enough to make Miguel a Theurge worthy of some attention. It was his ability to channel his ancestors, however, that made him both a pawn and a revolutionary within his own sept.

The spirits speak in many tongues, and Miguel found it difficult to understand what it was they wanted of him. One spirit in particular, a Garou with dark fur turned white with age, was particularly disturbing. This Garou forced Miguel

to witness a scene from ages past, in which the beast dismembered a large bat, over and over again. The guilt associated with this vision was overwhelming, and Miguel could make no sense of it. Driven to the brink of madness by the spirit's visions, the young Theurge undertook an Umbral quest to find the source of his ancestor's guilt. He investigated ruins throughout Mexico, and he learned everything he could about the people in the vision. What he found surprised him: the spirit was a Garou named Dark Claw of Vengeance, and he was the Garou whose claws had killed the last of the Camazotz.

Miguel's elders were stunned at this turn of events, as no one in Miguel's family line had ever had contact with Dark Claw of Vengeance's spirit in the past. That alone made the event portentous, and the leaders of the sept bade Miguel investigate the matter further so that he might determine how best to handle it. On reflection, Miguel found only one way to settle the issue: he had to seek out an audience with Bat, the fallen patron of the Camazotz, and put his ancestor's spirit to rest once and for all. The only way to do this, of course, was to travel to Malfeas itself, a journey that was perilous indeed.

Miguel's pack, to say nothing of his sept, dismissed the idea as absurd. Such a journey was plainly foolhardy, and they would have to find another way to quiet the restless spirit. But Miguel was made of sterner stuff than they had realized; the force of his will was staggering, and his adamant refusal to shift his stance even in the slightest ultimately overwhelmed his septmates' reservations. The elders washed their hands of the matter, but his pack stood by him, such was their faith in his visions. And so it was that they traveled to Malfeas.

None in Miguel's pack will speak of their journey, nor of their audience with Bat at the journey's end. All that is known is that Miguel emerged from the experience a potent Theurge, that his pack was battered and broken by the experience, and that Bat now serves as the pack's totem. The pack's sept has been renamed the Sept of the Earth Mother, and those who could not accept Miguel's revelations have been asked to leave. In the meantime, Miguel has turned his patron's unique gifts against the minions of the Wyrm, tearing into the Sabbat vampires that stalk the cities and the corporate interests that plague Mexico and the southern United States with equal fervor.

What has happened to Miguel and his pack, and what it means, is a matter of great controversy within the Shadow Lord tribe. Miguel does not smell of the Wyrm, nor is his scent somehow masked. He is of Gaia, as he has always been. However, Bat has not been redeemed; he is still a fallen totem, yet now seems to have aspects of both Gaia and the Wyrm. The ultimate significance of this turn of events, both for Miguel and for the Garou in general, remains to be seen.

Image: Miguel is a fairly nondescript Mestizo youth, seventeen years in age. He dresses as well as he can, but given his limited funds that's typically not terribly impressive. Miguel usually wears a serious expression, as his harrowing experiences in the Umbra have made him take his role as Theurge and petitioner of Bat very seriously. He is a gangly Mexican wolf in wolf form, and is rather short in Crinos form — a mere seven feet high, and under 300 pounds.

Roleplaying Notes: You used to be a kid who was high on life, intoxicated with the world around you. That part of you still remains, but it has been muted by your quest to restore Bat as a totem of Gaia. Now, you are a serious and powerful Theurge, and you act the part. Look to your packmates for support, but do not let them sway you when you believe something must be done. Gaia's plan for you has been made plain, and while you regret the pain your pack has endured on your behalf you cannot let that regret sway you from your current path.

Breed: Homid

Auspice: Theurge

Rank: 3

Physical: Strength 3 (5/7/6/4), Dexterity 4 (4/5/6/6), Stamina 3 (5/6/6/5)

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 2 (2/0/0/0), Appearance 3 (2/0/3/3)

Mental: Perception 6, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Dodge 3, Empathy 2, Expression 3, Primal-Urge 3

Skills: Animal Ken 2, Etiquette 4, Leadership 4, Stealth 2

Knowledges: Enigmas 3, Investigation 3, Linguistics 1, Occult 4, Rituals 5

Backgrounds: Ancestors 5, Fetish 3, Resources 2, Rites 4, Totem 5

Rage: 3; **Gnosis:** 6; **Willpower:** 9

Gifts: (1) Ears of the Bat, Persuasion, Seizing the Edge, Sense Wyrm, Spirit Speech; (2) Patagia, Song of the Earth Mother, Sight from Beyond; (3) Direct the Storm, Pulse of the Invisible, A Thousand Eyes

Rites: Miguel knows all minor rites, and all rites of rank 3 or lower. Bat has also taught him the Rite of the Hurricane.

Margrave Yuri Konietzko

Even from the beginning of his life, shortly after World War II, great things were expected of Yuri Konietzko. His father, a Shadow Lord of great renown in Germany, expected him to bring together the Garou tribes in the aftermath of the tragedy of the war, and his mother hoped her status as Kin to the Silver Fang House of the Crescent Moon would help heal the rift between the two tribes. But, it was not to be. The politics of the human world and the tumult of the Garou world made such a reconciliation impossible, as did the fact that the Silver Fangs yet retained their hold on the Sept of the Night Sky. But the elder Konietzko refused to give up hope: he clung to the idea throughout Yuri's childhood, and always instructed his son to keep the Shadow Lords strong and do all he could to bring the tribes of the Garou Nation together, that they might tear the Wyrm from the world and end the horror of war forever.

Konietzko took his father's words to heart, and trained relentlessly to become the powerful leader his father wanted him to be. He became a ruthless politician, inherited his father's title, and began battling the Wyrm in Germany even before his First Change overtook him. He was a legend by the time he was twenty, and resolved to bide his time until he got an opportunity to battle the Wyrm directly.

That opportunity came in 1991, shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The Lords in the Margrave's sept cheered, but Konietzko knew this was only the beginning of their battle. The cold war had kept the world in a sort of stasis, and it stifled the Wyrm's attempts to expand its hold on Gaia. But once the war ended, there was nothing left to keep the Wyrm in check. The Margrave moved quickly, securing Shadow Lord lands in Romania so that vampires could not overrun them once again. At home in the Sept of the Night Sky, Yuri Konietzko had come into his own. Now, however, his world was about to go to hell.

The vampires that infested Carpathia were a serious threat, but the Shadow Lords had been dealing with them for centuries. Now, however, the Margrave also had to deal with Wyrm-tainted economic interests seeking to capitalize on the chaos that followed in freedom's wake. And as Yugoslavia tore itself apart, Konietzko also found himself having to deal with more Wyrmspawn than the region had seen in decades. While most Garou would say the situation had gone from bad to worse, the Margrave found that things were humming along perfectly: They were now horrible enough that the tribes might actually come to their senses, demand proper leadership, and get on with the process of taking their world back from the monsters. Several years of fighting, careful negotiation with tribes such as the Black Furies, Red Talons, and Get of Fenris, and a fair bit of utter ruthlessness allowed Konietzko to forge a coalition of Garou dedicated to stamping the most overt Wyrm threats out of East-

ern Europe. Just when he thought he had everything under control, though, the Shadow Curtain around Russia dropped, and with it the Margrave's plans changed.

Konietzko had expected the Silver Fangs to weather the war in Russia quite a bit better than they actually had. House Wise Heart is gone, and House Crescent Moon has been gutted; the Silver Fang leadership in Russia is thus all but gone, leaving only the House of the Gleaming Eye to handle affairs in mainland Europe. This is simply not enough. While Konietzko would love to take command of the Garou Nation as much as any other Shadow Lord, the fact remains that there are simply not enough Shadow Lords to manage all of the Garou in Europe. Fortunately, however, other tribes have risen to the occasion, and are now serving as capable betas in the Silver Fangs' stead. The Fenrir and the Black Furies have proven to be capable of working closely together in Russia, first to prop up the Silver Fangs and now to prop up the fragile coalition of tribes that has replaced them. Those two tribes have similarly taken steps to work with the Lords in Eastern Europe, and along with the Red Talons are making admirable progress in cleaning up Yugoslavia and the other countries thrown into chaos by communism's fall. Things are looking up for the Margrave, but only time will tell if his bid for power is ultimately successful.

Image: In Homid form, the Margrave is a savagely handsome man in his late 50s. He wears a full beard and long, straight hair, and he is surrounded by a predatory aura of great intensity. He dresses with a sort of raw elegance, tempered by the needs of the moment. In Lupus form he is lean and powerful, and his fur is jet black.

Roleplaying Notes: It wasn't your idea to usurp control of the Garou Nation from the Silver Fangs. Indeed, you were perfectly content to leave leadership of the Garou to them if they proved capable enough to do it. But they weren't up to the task, and as a result you have had to step in and clean up their mess. Now, nothing matters but winning. Winning against the vampires, against the fomori and the Banes, and against anyone who dares to get in your way. In lesser Garou, this would be an obsession — in you, it is vision.

Breed: Homid

Auspice: Theurge

Rank: 6

Physical: Strength 4 (6/8/7/5), Dexterity 4 (4/5/6/6), Stamina 4 (6/7/7/6)

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 5 (4/2/2/2), Appearance 4 (3/0/4/4)

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 5, Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Empathy 4, Expression 3, Intimidation 5, Primal-Urge 5, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 5

Skills: Animal Ken 3, Drive 2, Etiquette 5, Firearms 3, Klaive Dueling 5, Leadership 5, Melee 4, Stealth 3, Survival 3

Knowledges: Enigmas 5, Investigation 4, Law 3, Linguistics 4, Occult 5, Politics 5, Rituals 5, Wyrm Lore 4

Backgrounds: Clout 5, Contacts 5, Fetish 5, Kinfolk 5, Pure Breed 3, Resources 4, Rites 5, Totem 5

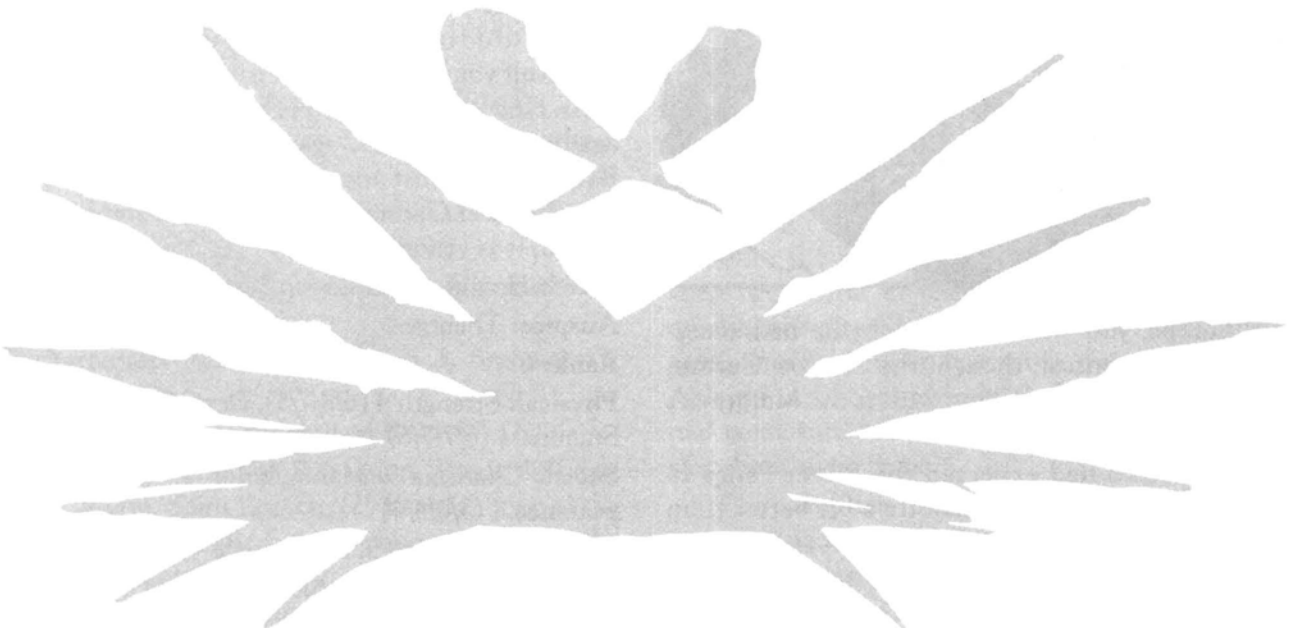
Rage: 8; **Gnosis:** 10; **Willpower:** 10

Gifts: (1) Aura of Confidence, Fatal Flaw, Master of Fire, Persuasion, Seizing the Edge, Sense Wyrm, Spirit Speech; (2) Clap of Thunder, Cold Voice of Reason, Command Spirit, Luna's Armor, Name the Spirit, Sight from Beyond, Staredown; (3) Curse of

Corruption, Disquiet, Exorcism, Paralyzing Stare, Pulse of the Invisible, Summon Stormcrow; (4) Call the Storm, Grasp the Beyond, Open Wounds, Raven's Wings, Spirit Drain, Seeds of Doubt, Spirit Ward, Strength of the Dominator; (5) Malleable Spirit, Obedience, Part the Veil, Shadow Pack, Spirit Vessel

Rites: Konietzko is a Rank 6 Theurge, and as such knows every rite not restricted to a specific tribe or region.

Fetishes: Thunder's Bracers, grand klaive. As one of the most powerful Garou in the world, the Margrave can get his hands on just about any fetish, given time.



Shadow Lords™

Name:	**Breed:**	**Pack Name:**
Player:	**Auspice:**	**Pack Totem:**
Chronicle:	**Camp:**	**Concept:**

Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●○○○○	Charisma	●○○○○	Perception	●○○○○
Dexterity	●○○○○	Manipulation	●○○○○	Intelligence	●○○○○
Stamina	●○○○○	Appearance	●○○○○	Wits	●○○○○

Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledges	
Alertness	○○○○○	Animal Ken	○○○○○	Computer	○○○○○
Athletics	○○○○○	Crafts	○○○○○	Enigmas	○○○○○
Brawl	○○○○○	Drive	○○○○○	Investigation	○○○○○
Dodge	○○○○○	Etiquette	○○○○○	Law	○○○○○
Empathy	○○○○○	Firearms	○○○○○	Linguistics	○○○○○
Expression	○○○○○	Leadership	○○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Intimidation	○○○○○	Melee	○○○○○	Occult	○○○○○
Primal-Urge	○○○○○	Performance	○○○○○	Politics	○○○○○
Streetwise	○○○○○	Stealth	○○○○○	Rituals	○○○○○
Subterfuge	○○○○○	Survival	○○○○○	Science	○○○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds		Gifts	Gifts
	○○○○○		
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Glory

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Honor

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Wisdom

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Rage

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Gnosis

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Willpower

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Health

Bruised		❑
Hurt	-1	❑
Injured	-1	❑
Wounded	-2	❑
Mauled	-2	❑
Crippled	-5	❑
Incapacitated		❑

Tribal Weakness

FAILURE'S DAGGER:
-1 RENOWN FOR FAILURE

SHADOW LORDS™

Homid	Glabro	Crinos	Hispo	Lupus
No Change	Strength (+2)____	Strength (+4)____	Strength (+3)____	Strength (+1)____
	Stamina (+2)____	Dexterity (+1)____	Dexterity (+2)____	Dexterity (+2)____
	Appearance (-1)____	Stamina (+3)____	Stamina (+3)____	Stamina (+2)____
	Manipulation (-2)____	Appearance 0	Manipulation (-3)____	Manipulation (-3)____
		Manipulation (-3)____	+1 Die to Bite Damage	-2 Perception Diff.
Difficulty: 6	Difficulty: 7	Difficulty: 6	Difficulty: 7	Difficulty: 6
		INCITE DELIRIUM IN HUMANS		

Other Traits

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Fetishes

Item:_____ Level____ Gnosis____
Power:_____
Item:_____ Level____ Gnosis____
Power:_____
Item:_____ Level____ Gnosis____
Power:_____
Item:_____ Level____ Gnosis____
Power:_____

Rites

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Combat

Maneuver/Weapon	Roll	Difficulty	Damage	Range	Rate	Clip

Brawling Chart

Maneuver	Roll	Diff	Damage
Bite	Dex+Brawl	5	Strength+1/A
Body Tackle	Dex+Brawl	7	Special/B
Claw	Dex+Brawl	6	Strength+1/A
Grapple	Dex+Brawl	6	Strength/B
Kick	Dex+Brawl	7	Strength+1/B
Punch	Dex+Brawl	6	Strength/B

A=Aggravated Damage
B=Bashing Damage

Armor:_____

Shadow Lords™

Nature: **Demeanor:**

Merits & Flaws

Merit	Type	Cost	Flaw	Type	Bonus

Expanded Background

Ancestors

Pure Breed

Contacts

Resources

Kinfolk

Totem

Equipment

Gear (Carried):

Equipment (Owned):

Experience

TOTAL:

Gained From:

TOTAL SPENT:

Spent On:

Sept

Name:

Caern Location:

Level: Type:

Totem:

Leader:

SHADOW LORDS™

History

Prelude

Description

Age:
Hair:
Eyes:
Race:
Nationality:
Sex:

	Height	Weight
Homid:		
Glabro:		
Crinos:		
Hispo:		
Lupus:		

Battle Scars:

Metis Deformity:

Visuals

Pack Chart

Character Sketch

TRIBEBOOK: SHADOW LORDS™

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